

The Attitudes and Policies
of the
New Zealand Labour Movement
Towards Non-European Immigration
1878 - 1928

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a study of the racial attitudes of the New Zealand Labour Movement for the period 1878-1928. These attitudes are examined in relation to non-European immigrants.

It is argued that, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, racist views were dominant in the Labour Movement. Those views were held unchallenged until international socialism made a significant impact in the movement. In response to the efforts of internationalists there was a moderation of racial views and, by 1928, racism no longer influenced the policies of Labour organisations in the country.

PREFACE

This thesis was originally intended to be a study of the New Zealand Labour Movement and the 1920 Immigration Restriction Amendment Act. However as I explored the involvement of the Labour Movement in this, the last chapter of New Zealand's attempts to curb Asian immigration, I discovered that Labour's involvement in the issue stretched as far back as 1878. It was an unrelated coincidence of history that 1878, the year which saw the first major step in the development of the Movement, the Trade Union Act, should also have seen the beginning^{of} Labour's concerns with Asian immigration.

A number of works have dealt with the nature of the New Zealand response to non-European immigration but none, to my knowledge, have focused on a particular group in the colony's society and traced its involvement over a period of time. In Labour history there have been occasional references to the attitudes and policies towards Asians but none have treated it as a theme of importance in its own right. It is hoped then that this study will add further insights to the nature of the early New Zealand Labour Movement.

It would be difficult to list all those who have assisted me in the research and writing stages of this thesis. The Librarians of the Auckland University, Victoria University, General Assembly, Christchurch Public and Hocken Libraries have been most helpful. Thanks go to the staff of the Manuscripts section of the Alexander Turnbull Library for their patience as I ploughed through many boxes of archival material, and to the Reference Staff of the University of Canterbury for manhandling numerous dusty volumes.

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My debt to the Vietnamese community in Christchurch I gladly acknowledge. They helped me to appreciate in a vital way the problems of living in a foreign land. My thanks also to sympathetic friends who endured my ramblings on many occasions. I am very grateful to Mrs Ilene Beadle for her efforts, particularly as time was so pressed.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AJHR	Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives
ASU	Auckland Local Branch of the Federated Seamen's Union of New Zealand
CTLC	Canterbury Trades and Labour Council
FSU	Federated Seamen's Union of New Zealand
<u>LT</u>	Lyttelton Times
<u>MW</u>	Maoriland Worker
NZLP	New Zealand Labour Party
NZPD	New Zealand Parliamentary Debates
<u>NZT</u>	New Zealand Times
<u>NZW</u>	New Zealand Worker
TLC	Trades and Labour Councils of New Zealand
WSU	Wellington Local Branch of the Federated Seamen's Union of New Zealand

CHAPTER I: CHINESE LABOUR IN THE NEW COLONY: 1853-1871

Colonists in the early stages of New Zealand's settlement were confronted with the question of non-European immigration on a number of occasions. Suggestions had been made as early as 1853 that Chinese be brought to New Zealand to supply a need for labour. Nothing eventuated of this scheme but thirteen years later the country saw large numbers of Chinese introduced onto the Otago goldfields. This chapter will discuss these incidents and examine the attitudes in New Zealand society towards non-European immigration. This early contact with non-European immigrants forms an important background to the Labour Movement's involvement in the issue later in the century.

Non-European immigration to New Zealand in the nineteenth century was composed almost exclusively of Asian immigration and, in the colonists' minds, it was the only type of non-European immigration that they were concerned about. For the greater part of the century Asian immigration consisted of Chinese immigrants. An awareness of Indian and Japanese immigration developed in the 1890's but prior to 1878 there were no indications that any group other than the Chinese was considered.

The discovery of gold in Australia had important repercussions for the employment situation in New Zealand. Over 1,500 New Zealand labourers moved across the Tasman to seek their fortune and this created a labour shortage in parts of the colony.¹ A growth in demand for farm produce in

1. J.O. Miller, Early Victorian New Zealand; a study of racial tension and social attitudes, London. O.U.P. 1958 p.128.

Australia increased the need for labour, especially among Canterbury landowners.² After wage rises in the early 1890's business interests and runholders in Canterbury sought a way of ameliorating the situation.

In early June 1853 plans were afoot to bring Chinese labour into the colony. The initial moves were taken by Tancred, chairman of the Canterbury Colonists' Society, who believed that the importation of Chinese would solve the labour problems on his own estate as well as the difficulties of the settlement. His plan received the approval of Henry Sewell and other prominent settlers. E.G.Wakefield discarded his ideas of an English settlement in New Zealand and became an enthusiastic supporter of the scheme. In a letter to Rintoul he stated that 'Chinese labour promises to be the only means of saving production (except gold) in all this part of the world.'³ In the second week of June meetings were held in Wellington to further the scheme. Those who attended included E.G.Wakefield, E.J.Wakefield, W.B.Rhodes, G.Rhodes, Clifford, Hart and Ward.⁴ The meeting was successful in its aims and plans were set in motion to bring the Chinese to New Zealand.

On 2 July 1853 an advertisement appeared in the Lyttelton Times which called for applications for Chinese labourers.

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2. C.G.Hensley, 'Labour and Immigration, 1853-8', History of Canterbury, Vol. II pp54-5.
 3. Wakefield to Rintoul 22 June 1853. Quoted in P.A.Stuart, Edward Gibbon Wakefield in New Zealand: His political career 1852-4. Price Milburn. Victoria University of Wellington, 1971. p55.
 4. The Journal of Henry Sewell 1853-7, edited with an introduction by W.D.McIntyre, Christchurch. Whitcoulls 1980 Vol I, p300n.

The advertisement was inserted by W.B.Rhodes, a landowner, N.Bowler, a shipping agent, John Johnston and N.Levin, both businessmen.⁵ They recommended the Chinese for a number of positions including: shepherds, stock-keepers, mechanics, dairy workers, sawyers, fishermen, gardeners, cooks, grooms, and footmen. The first shipment of 250 Chinese would cost prospective employers about £10- £12 for each worker.

The appeal of Chinese rather than European labour was for a number of reasons. The most important of these was that it would meet the desperate shortage of labour and as China was much closer than England this need could be met in a relatively short time. But there were other advantages of Chinese labour. Had the scheme proceeded then the Chinese would have been employed under an indentured system and there were many benefits in this for the Europeans. Wages could be set at a lower rate than those paid for European labour and indentured labour would not be free labour. Landowners would then gain employees who were permanent or semi-permanent labour and with a regular supply of labour temporary set-backs to Canterbury's development would have been easily overcome.

The attractiveness of Chinese labour was not economic only and contemporaries felt that Chinese immigrants would serve a useful social purpose. As Eldred Grigg comments: 'Gentlefolk had always thought the Chinese might be a useful stabilizing influence in the community... They praised the quiet, respectable manners of Chinese immigrants.'⁶ This

5. LT 2 July 1853

6. S.T. Eldred-Grigg, A Southern gentry: New Zealanders who inherited the earth, Wellington. Reed 1980 p64.

thinking reflected the paternalism of respectable people in the colony who saw no threat from the Chinese.

Working men in Canterbury were, naturally, disturbed at the prospects of competition from a favoured type of labour. A number of letters which appeared in the Lyttelton Times expressed this concern. The 'speculators in human flesh' were accused of seeking to reduce the wage levels in the colony. Attempts to alleviate these fears of the European labourers were not very convincing. The editorial of 16 July argued for the pressing need for labour and claimed that in England there was no excess labour. This point was disputed by a worker who had been in England during the preceding year and found many out of work. It was also claimed that the English labourer, who had 'superior intelligence and practical ability', would quickly become overseers of the Chinese and be lifted to a higher status in the colony.

The fate of the issue was decided at the July 1853 elections for the local Superintendent. There were three candidates for the position: Fitzgerald, Tancred and Colonel Campbell, the 'champion of the British working men.' Fitzgerald who won the election, was evasive on the Chinese importation issue, and content to remark that Chinese labour would prove dearer in the long run than European immigration.⁷ Campbell, an excellent opportunist, opposed the Chinese labour scheme and this was effective in his picking up some of the working class vote. Tancred, who polled the lowest, spoilt his chances of victory by his plans for the importation

7. Hensley, 'Labour and Immigration', pp54-5.

scheme. At a meeting of the Christchurch Colonists' Society held in October he commented that the 'political excitement' of the movement meant that the issue did not receive a 'calm and unprejudiced consideration.'⁸ He held out hopes that the idea would be raised at a later date but nothing eventuated.

Although the first of Wakefield's two means of boosting production in New Zealand, Chinese labour, had come to nothing, the second was to be of great importance to the colony. Gold had been mined in New Zealand from as early as 1852 but it was not until 1857 that the first significant discovery was found. The arrival of a number of miners to the Nelson district began the gold-mining era in New Zealand. In 1858 the central government passed the Goldfields Act which provided for goldfield commissioners and police.

In August 1857 it was rumoured that Chinese from the Victoria goldfields were due to arrive in Nelson.⁹ The citizens of Nelson responded strongly to this rumour and a Vigilante Committee was formed to prevent the Chinese from landing. Townsfolk and miners, some of whom had recently arrived from Victoria, spoke with alarm and disgust at the prospects of having the 'Mongolian filth' in their community. However, the efforts of the inhabitants of Nelson were to no avail as no Chinese arrived in the district.

Price places importance on the disturbance because it was 'one of the first recorded cases when anti-Asian agitation sprang up, simply from fear and suspicion of what might be,

8. LT 29 October 1853.

9. S.Sothi Rachagan, 'Asian Immigration to New Zealand. A Study of attitudes and legislation.' Unpub. MA Thesis University of Otago. 1972. pp51-3.

and without a single Chinese present.'¹⁰ A key factor in producing the community's protest was the preconceived view of the Chinese held by the Nelson citizens. Although some of the miners had some experience of Chinese miners their accusations and fears were based on certain prejudicial and stereotyped views on the Chinese. No Chinese immigrant was to be evaluated on his individual merit, all Chinese were regarded alike, and all Chinese were undesirables in the colony.

In 1861 the focus of New Zealand gold-mining shifted south to Otago after Gabriel Read made big finds in the Tuapeka district. Read's find started a large scale gold-rush to Otago and by the middle of 1863 over 24,000 miners were active in the Otago goldfields. The impact on Otago was considerable. In two years the population of the province rose five-fold to around 60,000 in 1863 and Dunedin became the largest city in the country.¹¹ This first wave of miners to the Otago fields did not include any Chinese. The Chinese in Australia were not drawn by the advertisements of the shipping companies and continued to work their claims patiently on the Australian goldfields.

By 1864 the peak of the Otago rushes had finished and a mass exodus from the fields took place. For three months during 1864 over 7,000 miners left for Australia or the West

10. C.A.Price, The Great White Walls are Built: restrictive immigration to North America and Australasia, 1836-1888 Canberra, ANU Press, 1974. p93.

11. K.Sinclair, A History of New Zealand, Harmondsworth. Penguin Books, 1959, p91.

Coast fields.¹² In the same year commercial interests in Otago advocated the introduction of Chinese into the province in order to supply cheap labour. Miners at Bannockburn and the Nevis protested against this and prepared a petition to the Government.¹³ The miners' sought the exclusion of further Chinese on a number of grounds. The Chinese, it was alleged, took up too much alluvial ground, made no contribution to the Colony's welfare, were of questionable moral habits and guilty of numerous robberies.¹⁴

But Otago was not to see a repeat of the situation which had occurred in Canterbury during 1893. With their wealth and political power the Dunedin merchant class was too powerful of an opponent for the inland miners. The advantages of the industrious and numerous Chinese were badly needed in the province and the interests of the miners were sacrificed to that of Otago's merchants.

The decisive step to bring Chinese workers to New Zealand was taken by the Otago Provincial Council and the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce in September 1865. It was felt by members of these institutions that a strong demographic base in the province and continued gold mining would reverse the depressed state of Otago. On both counts the Chinese were regarded as an adequate solution. In association with Cargill, a local shipping agent, and H.O.Mee, a Chinese

12. F.Fyffe, 'Chinese Immigration to New Zealand in the Nineteenth Century', Unpub. MA Thesis Victoria University of Wellington 1948 p15.

13. J.H.M.Salmon, A History of Goldmining in New Zealand. Wellington, Government Printer 1963 p112.

14. J.C.Parcell, Heart of the Desert: a history of the Cromwell and Bannockburn Districts of Central Otago, Christchurch, Whitcoulls 1976, p148.

entrepreneur, Chinese were sponsored into Otago. The scheme received some support the following month when a public meeting held at Clyde resolved in favour of the introduction of the Chinese.¹⁵

The first group of assisted Chinese miners arrived in early February 1866. Twelve miners landed in Dunedin and proceeded to the inland fields. The Chinese arrived slowly but steadily throughout 1866 and 1867. At the end of 1867 there were nearly 1,270 Chinese miners on the Otago fields concentrated mainly in Mount Ida, Cromwell and Tuapeka.¹⁶ In 1871 there was a sudden increase in arrivals. Otago had 2,976 Chinese in January 1871 but by the end of the year this figure had risen to nearly 4,200. In the months of July, August and September nearly 1,000 Chinese immigrants landed in Dunedin.¹⁷

Reactions from European miners to the Chinese varied. Early fears had been expressed by miners at Tuapeka and Mount Ida after news of the Chamber's plans had been released.¹⁸ These fears did not dissipate but they were not widespread and for the first few years the Chinese miners were left to themselves. Some minor disturbances occurred but these reflected tensions in some local fields. In some areas the Chinese became suitable scapegoats if unsolved crimes had been committed.¹⁹ The Courts acquitted the Chinese of false charges and in February 1868 a proclamation was issued which assured the Chinese of their rights to the protection of the

15. Ibid

16. Fyffe, 'Chinese Immigration to New Zealand,' p22a

17. Rachagan, 'Asian Immigration to New Zealand', p63

18. Fyffe, 'Chinese Immigration to New Zealand' p19

19. Parcell, Heart of the Desert, p149.

law.²⁰

In 1871 popular discontent emerged as provincial newspapers and the Arrowtown Miners' Association raised the cry against the Chinese. The Miners' Association prepared a petition which was circulated around the different gold-fields and presented to Parliament. By the time the petition was submitted it had obtained about 2,400 signatures.²¹ The miners warned the Government that unless measures were taken to deal with Chinese immigration, there would be 'bloodshed and anarchy, or the total exodus of your petitioners from this colony.'²² Newspapers such as the Dunstan Times and Lake Wakitapu Mail helped to encourage the agitation by making unfavourable comments about the Chinese.

Support for the miners came from their Parliamentary representative, G.E. Haughton, who inspired the formation of a Select Committee to investigate the charges against the Chinese. The Committee, which heard submissions from those involved in the anti-Chinese agitation, sought the opinions of goldfield wardens, police, and other officials. Their report was presented in October 1871. The Committee dismissed the emotive charges against the Chinese, declared them fit to live in the colony, and declined to recommend that Chinese immigration be restricted.²³

European miners gave many reasons why they objected to

20. Salmon, History of Goldmining, p113

21. AJHR, Aug-Nov. 1871, p181.

22. Quoted in P. Butler, Opium and Gold, Martinborough Alister Taylor 1977, p17.

23. 'Reports of Chinese Immigration Committee', AJHR 1871 II H: 5, 5A, 5B.

the Chinese. The accusations against the Chinese were numerous and included the following: Chinese miners were not permanent settlers, they did not bring their wives (and yet were accused of polygamy), lowered the standard of morality, were liars and thieves, gambled, spread diseases such as leprosy and scrofulous fever, were physically dirty, exported gold, smoked opium, were a threat to national security, hindered European immigration to New Zealand, used too much alluvial ground, were stingy, and belonged to an alien race. Some of these objections were covered by the Committee on Chinese Immigration which asked specific questions on the problems of gambling, disturbance of the peace, morality, intermarriages and labour costs. The findings of the Committee cleared the Chinese from the allegations against them and therefore casts doubts on the listed grievances as explanations for the outburst of anti-Chinese feeling.

There are other grounds on which the European miners' objections to the Chinese are unconvincing. Miners accused the Chinese of not bringing their wives to the country, but the overwhelming male population of the European miners was not substantially different from that of the Chinese. In December 1867 the West Coast gold mining community had only 15.2% women in its adult population.²⁴ Further, the sex-ratio disparity among the Europeans meant that prostitution was a major social problem among the miners. Neither prostitution or homosexuality were serious problems among the

24. P.R.May, The West Coast Gold Rushes, Christchurch, Pegasus Press 1962 p283.

Chinese. Another problem of the Europeans, drinking, was hardly evident among the industrious Chinese. The belief that the Chinese were obsessively frugal is also hard to substantiate. Chinese miners gave local storekeepers good business and when in possession of money, spent it freely. A contemporary commented that the Chinese were often the best customers for luxury items such as lobsters, sardines, jams, pork and 'Old Tom'.²⁵ The argument that the Chinese took revenue out of the country was refuted by a Chinese businessman. In a letter to the Otago Witness he pointed out that European miners indirectly did the same thing because the banks, who bought gold, also exported it. This, he argued, was no different from a Chinese miner who sent his gold directly overseas.²⁶

The miners' attitudes, then, cannot be accounted for by the grievances that were stated against the Chinese. These accusations were untrue or referred to characteristics of the Chinese also found among the European miners. The miners stated objections were therefore an expression of anti-Chinese feeling and not the cause of it.

Anti-Chinese feeling was fostered by an awareness of the cultural and racial differences between the Chinese and Europeans and the significance which was attached to these differences. Culturally and racially the Chinese were regarded as an inferior group to the Europeans. The warden at Lawrence summed up the miners' attitude when he commented.

25. Butler, Opium and Gold, pp 13,14,17.

26. Ibid p15.

that 'the European miner looks upon the Chinaman as an inferior animal.'²⁷ This contempt for the Chinese had two key aspects. There was the European arrogance which regarded different cultural groupings as inferior, decadent and under certain circumstances, intolerable. On the goldfields the Chinese were the one, conspicuous example of a different cultural group. Chinese dress, language, choice of accommodation and customs made them culturally distinct and, when judged by the standards of the Europeans, undeniably inferior. The president of the Arrowtown Miners' Association spoke for most miners with his cry of 'We are free men - they are slaves! We are Christians - they are heathens! We are Britons - they are Mongolians!'²⁸

Other different cultural groups on the goldfields, for example, Germans, Italians, Greeks, French, and to a lesser degree, Irish, were not subject to the same contempt. The reason for this was that the Chinese were also disdained on racial grounds. The miners' petition to the government stated that 'The Chinese belong to a totally different race of men, with whom your petitioners cannot assimilate in any respect.'²⁹ Concerns over intermarriages stemmed from this attitude.

In the rhetoric which accompanied the opposition to the Chinese the cultural and racial beliefs of the Europeans were not separated. Cultural fears had distinctly biological over-tones and the talk of race was both cultural and biolog-

27. AJHR 1871 H-S p21.

28. Salmon, History of Goldmining, p113.

29. Butler, Opium and Gold, p15.

ical. These attitudes of the Europeans towards the Chinese had been present prior to the 1871 disturbance but had not been actively expressed. In 1871 two factors occurred which turned this anti-Chinese prejudice into anti-Chinese agitation.

The first factor was a decisive deterioration in the economic situation of the southern economy. Gold yields declined and a recession in 1869-1870 meant that profitable mining was a rare occurrence. The difficulties of the decline were felt by the European miners who had tended to rely on luck and the discovery of rich veins of gold. In contrast the Chinese worked on abandoned diggings and achieved their rewards by working long, hard hours. Their modest results were produced slowly, but consistently. European miners who returned from distant fields encountered camps of Chinese which were still able to extract some gold and the progress of the Chinese aroused a deep resentment among the frustrated European miners. This frustration was expressed in a campaign to exclude them from the fields and the colony.

The arrival of a large number of Chinese immigrants in the third quarter of the year aggravated the situation. European miners had long regarded the Chinese as a threat to their livelihood and, as more Chinese arrived, fears of being overwhelmed became stronger. These fears were compounded by a sense of hopelessness as the miners felt that it was beyond them to halt the flow of new arrivals. The feelings of the miners were captured by Barton at the Select Committee hearing when he claimed that 'a few Chinamen would not be objected to, because they would be harmless, if not useful.

But when they are counted by the thousands "the conflict of races" begins at once.'³⁰

The question of Chinese numbers only became important during 1871. At some local fields Chinese miners made up a majority of the population but, prior to 1871, no significant problems occurred. In 1868 Clyde had 50 Chinese miners and 44 Europeans while in Alexandra the numbers were 100 and 148 respectively.³¹ In the Nevis in 1869 Chinese outnumbered Europeans by 25:1.³² However on the Brannock-burn field in September 1871, where Chinese accounted for 42% of the population, an anti-Chinese Association was formed.³³

After the 1871 disturbance there were no further notable incidents of conflict with the Chinese on the goldfields. Chinese immigration slowed down substantially in 1872 and the out-migration of Europeans from the gold-fields increased.

In retrospect the goldfield opposition to the Chinese was a relatively tame affair, particularly when compared to the riots on the Australian goldfields. In part this was the product of the much smaller contingent of Chinese who came to New Zealand. As late as 1881, when there were 5,000 Chinese in the country, their percentage of the total population was not much more than 1%.³⁴ The other factor which

30. AJHR 1871 H-5A p14.

31. C.W.S.Moore, The Dunstan: A History of the Alexandra-Clyde Districts, (Reprint) Christchurch 1978 p34.

32. Parcell, Heart of the Desert, p149.

33. Rachagan, 'Asian Immigration to New Zealand,' p63.

34. P.S.O'Connor, 'Keeping New Zealand White, 1908-1920' NZJH Vol 2 No 1 April 1968 pp41-69. p42.

helped to moderate expression of antipathy towards the Chinese was the greater control that the police had in the Otago goldfields. The Chinese had received a firm assurance that they would be protected from the law and this was diligently enforced by many goldfield police.

During this later phase of the pre-1878 contact with non-European immigrants the urban working class was not particularly vocal. In his recollections on the arrival of the Chinese Alexander Bathgate noted that there were 'frequent murmurs from the working classes'.³⁵ Most of this protest came from the unemployed who feared that possibilities for jobs would become harder to find once the Chinese entered the colony. On the whole, though, the Chinese, because they took up mining, did not interfere with the labour market in the towns. Some worked as cabinetmakers in Dunedin but aroused no opposition.³⁶ A meeting held at Invercargill during October 1871 declared itself against the use of Chinese and coolie immigration in public work schemes. The meeting expressed concern that the Chinese in New Zealand would not remain in the digging districts forever and would soon spread to other centres where they would compete in other labour activities.³⁷ These fears however were on the periphery of the main campaign.

In the early stage of New Zealand's development there were clearly formed attitudes towards non-European immigrants.

35. A. Bathgate, Colonial Experiences, Christchurch. Capper Press, 1974 p170.

36. Ibid p180

37. LT 17 October 1871

On one hand moneyed interests in the colony regarded Chinese labour as an important element in the establishment of a colonial economy and society. The primary motive for Chinese labour among this section of the colony was economic. Chinese labour was regarded as a desirable alternative to European immigration to stimulate production and to provide necessary employment. However for a large section of the colony this approach to Chinese labour was unacceptable. Attitudes among many Europeans were heavily prejudiced against a group which was culturally and racially different. When this group was perceived as an economic threat these attitudes were actively expressed and Chinese immigration strongly opposed.

CHAPTER II: RACISM AND THE LABOUR MOVEMENT 1878-1899

Organised working-class bodies prior to 1890 were few in number and, generally, very weak. There were no labour political organisations and only the rare member of Parliament had a working class background. S.P. Andrews, a plasterer, became the first working man to enter Parliament by winning the Christchurch City seat in 1879. Unionism prior to 1890 was marked by its 'stop-start' development. A few societies were formed in the 1850's and 1860's, with the main trades being those of the printers, engineers, tailors and joiners. The principle of trade unionism was recognised with the passing of the 1878 Trade Union Act. The Act gave trade unions legal standing, but it did not lead to any major changes in the structure and vitality of the unions, as they continued to experience periods of growth and decline. The formation of the Auckland Trades Council in 1876 was the first significant step in coordinating union activity but the Council suffered a severe setback in the depression of the late 1870's. The 1880's saw the continuation of the earlier trends, although important new developments were taking place. Australian organisers worked among the seamen, watersiders and shearers, and the Trades Councils were revived in the form of Trades and Labour Councils. The framework in which the later growth of unionism was to take place had thus been formed.

Widespread agitation by the New Zealand working class against non-European immigration began in the first week of December 1878. It was triggered off by a strong anti-Chinese campaign that had begun a month earlier in Australia. On 18

November European crews employed by the Australian Steam Navigation Company went on strike over the use of cheap Chinese labour on the Company's vessels.¹ The strike spread rapidly to a number of Australian ports so that within five days nearly 800 seamen were on strike. The strike was reported extensively in New Zealand newspapers, leading many to believe that there was an imminent danger to New Zealand. By 6 December an anti-Chinese movement was under way in Wellington and a petition was circulating which called for a poll-tax to halt Chinese immigration to New Zealand.²

The interest taken in the issue grew rapidly and on 17 December a large public meeting was held in Wellington. The meeting, presided over by the city's mayor, featured a number of speakers who drew attention to alleged dangers of the Chinese. W. Hutchinson, a member of the House of Representatives, felt that the introduction of Chinese to New Zealand would have a 'debasing and demoralising influence' in the country.³ He commended the sailors and workmen in the ASN strike for their efforts as 'any attempt to swamp the labour market with an inferior race should be resisted.' Although the meeting drew contributions from a wide cross-section of the community it was clear that the greatest concerns were for the country's working class. One speaker,

1. A. Curthoys, "Conflict and Consensus", In Curthoys, A and Markus, A. Who are our Enemies? Racism and the Australian working class. Neutral Bays NSW. Halo and Irononger 1978 pp 48-65.

2. Lyttelton Times 7 December, 1878

3. NZT 18 December, 1878.

Wallace, expressed his hope that the working men of all New Zealand would receive the support which they deserved in keeping the labour market open to 'fair' competition. If this was not done than the consequences of Chinese cheap labour would mean the upsetting of the 'just relations of capital and labour', and the creation of social circumstances which would degrade the position of the European Labourer.⁴

The meeting passed some resolutions which expressed the determination of Wellington citizens to oppose the introduction of Chinese labour into New Zealand. It was hoped that other towns in the country would co-operate with Wellington in the cause.⁵ The Amalgamated Carpenters and Joiners' Society of Dunedin responded immediately to this call, and endorsed the stand taken by Wellington citizens. A £50 poll tax on Chinese was called for by the Society.⁶

Concern over Chinese immigration was sustained throughout December by interest in the Australian seamen's strike. Through good organisation and a strike fund the seamen were able to prolong the strike. The Seamen's Unions and the Trades and Labour Councils in New South Wales and Queensland sent delegates to other unions and held public meetings to solicit financial assistance. Of the seven delegates sent on this task two came to New Zealand where they met with some success.⁷

4. NZH 18 December 1878

5. LT 14 December 1878

6. LT 24 December 1878

7. Curthoys, "Conflict and Consensus" p59.

The impact of the efforts by the Australian seamen on the fledgling New Zealand Labour movement cannot be underestimated. Labour organisations in New Zealand regarded the strike as an important test case not just for Australia but also for New Zealand. Consequently no effort was spared to support the strikers. Bookbinders in Wellington began a subscription for the seamen and by 14 December had collected a modest sum of £2.13/-.⁸ A contribution of £20 from the Wellington seamen greatly boosted the giving and by 24 December the Lyttelton Times Wellington correspondent wrote that 'the working classes are subscribing freely towards the anti-Chinese fund.'⁹

The strike ended soon afterwards when, on 2 January 1879, a compromise agreement was reached between the ASN company and the union. With the termination of the strike the agitation in Wellington, the centre which had given the strongest support to the strike, waned. However the issue of Chinese immigration was not allowed to lapse and the cry for restriction was taken up in Auckland.

On 3 January 1879 the Native Minister, Sheehan, addressed the members of the Auckland Working Men's Club. In his speech he spent considerable time airing his views on Chinese immigration and affirmed the objectives of the anti-Chinese movement. Sheehan had two key objections to the Chinese. The first was that the Chinese were unsuitable immigrants to New Zealand because they did not come as permanent settlers. Also the climate of New Zealand was

8. LT 16 December 1878

9. LT 24 December 1878

suites for the Irish and English who were to share in the 'high destiny of the country of their adoption.'¹⁰

Sheehan's speech began a long discussion among the Auckland working men on the merits and demerits of Chinese immigration. In the early stages of the debate there was considerable division on the subject. Although a number of members of the Club wanted total exclusion of Chinese there was a large group that expressed appreciation for the Chinese. Some felt, contrary to Sheehan, that the Chinese would be useful settlers and colonists. They argued that the Chinese had the same 'instincts of home life, love of children, love of place' as the European and would make 'worthy co-workers with Britain's sons.'¹¹ The Europeans could only benefit from this situation as the Chinese would do the menial tasks disliked by tradesmen. Only one condition was placed on their entering New Zealand. The prospective Chinese immigrant would have to be accompanied by his wife and children. If this was done then the 'vices....justifiably chargeable' to the Chinese would be invalidated.

In the end those who opposed Chinese immigration won the day. In a vote taken on the subject, the majority decided for 'Down with the Chinese'.¹² Heslop, the secretary of the Working Men's Club began circulating a petition which called for a halt to Chinese immigration. The petition

10. LT 6 January 1879

11. LT 7 January 1879

12. LT 20 February 1879

drew attention to the fears that the working men had of a reduction in wages should the Chinese enter New Zealand. By the end of the first week in April the petition had received about 3,000 signatures¹³, demonstrating clearly the strength of opposition in the city to the Chinese.

In the middle months of the year anti-Chinese sentiment broke out in Christchurch, although the episode in the southern city differed from the Wellington and Auckland agitations. In the latter two cities the movement was controlled by organised labour bodies, but in Christchurch the disturbance was the product of crowd action. At a meeting of 100 unemployed on 20 May two resolutions were carried. One called for the Government to find work and to reduce immigration.¹⁴ The other attacked the Chinese and requested a stop to the 'large influx'. It was alleged that contractors were employing Chinese workers, in preference to other migrants, for low wages. This was given as the principle cause for the growing unemployment throughout the country. A larger meeting held the following week was dominated by a discussion on the Chinese question. The meeting was addressed by a Mr Hastings, who had been in New South Wales. He spoke forcefully against the Chinese, and used the seamen's strike as an illustration of the danger facing the colonies from the Chinese.¹⁵ At meetings held in subsequent weeks the issue was not raised at all and the short-lived agitation died down.

13. LT 8 April 1879

14. LT 20 May 1879

15. LT 26 May 1879

The opposition to the Chinese during these months was generally conducted in an orderly manner although a few incidents of violence did occur. An attack on two Chinese in Wellington was harshly rebuked by Sheehan who warned that such action was prejudicial to the working men's interests.¹⁶ In January 1879 workers at a Dunedin boat factory 'severely treated' a passing Chinese immigrant during their lunch hour.¹⁷

The fight for immigration restrictions was also taken up in Parliament. The issue was first raised in the 1878 Session by W.P. Reeves who moved that legislation be passed to halt the 'probable influx of Chinese into this country.'¹⁸ Reeves' motion lapsed but, under mounting public pressure, the issue was opened for further discussion. In 1880 W. Hutchinson introduced the Chinese Immigration Prohibition Bill. Hutchinson argued on economic, social and political grounds the undesirability of Chinese immigrants. They were 'unfitted' to take part in the government of a free society due to a 'slavish obedience' to government. Further, the Chinese would produce a servile race in the colony and they would reduce wages in the labour market.¹⁹ The Bill received support from R.Seddon, who believed that the 'Chinaman was

16. LT 6 January 1879

17. LT 15 January 1879

18. NZPD Vol 28 p418

19. NZPD Vol 36 p 92

inferior in every way, shape and form'.²⁰ The Bill was eventually withdrawn.

The remarks by Hutchinson and Seddon were among the first that reflected a conscious awareness that the economic and social difficulties of Chinese immigrants had a racial aspect. Sir George Grey elaborated on this in a memorandum of 1879 when he drew attention to the 'great struggle which must take place in this part of the world against barbarism.'²¹ The future of the Pacific Ocean lay in the ability of the Anglo-Saxon to remain unmixed from groups such as the Chinese.

The pressure of intercolonial politics led New Zealand to introduce its first restrictive legislation against the Chinese. Australian politicians were concerned that both colonies introduce similar legislation to deal with the perceived threat. At the 1881 Intercolonial Conference guidelines were set down for the proposed legislation. The result in New Zealand was the 1881 Chinese Immigration Restriction Act. The new Act imposed a £10 poll tax on Chinese immigrants and limited their numbers to one for every ten tons of vessel weight.²²

The stimulus to a renewed period of agitation against Chinese immigration came again from Australia. A recession in 1886-87 in Australia had stirred up considerable anti-Chinese feeling and pressure was put on New Zealand by the

20. NZPD Vol 36 p97.

21. AJHR 1879 D-3

22. New Zealand Statutes, 1881. pp 301-303.

Australian leaders to adopt further restrictive legislation.²³ Growing unemployment in New Zealand also led to unrest among the working class. Early in May 1888 the Knights of Labour, a new body active among the unemployed, urged the government to take immediate action to prevent Chinese from entering the colony.²⁴ In Auckland the local Trades and Labour Council held a lengthy discussion on the issue and declared itself in favour of the total exclusion of Chinese to New Zealand.²⁵ The Council, aware of the difficulties of Imperial politics, recommended combined action with Australia.

These early protestations from labour bodies were soon eclipsed when a more tangible threat was discovered. In May rumours were circulating that Chinese who had been prevented from landing in Australia were to be shipped to New Zealand. The first ship carrying these migrants, the 'Te Anau' was due early in the month at Invercargill. Immediately a mass meeting was held in the city with the aim of preventing the vessel offloading its Chinese passengers. The meeting declared that 'the time has arrived when the Anglo-Saxon race of New Zealand should make a stand against an invasion of its shores by a host of Mongolian barbarians.'²⁶ Two days later the Dunedin Carpenters' Society wholeheartedly gave its support to the Invercargill community and called on the Premier to enforce the immigration laws.²⁷ Such was the

23. Rachagan, 'Asian Immigration to New Zealand', p136

24. LT 5 May 1888

25. LT 7 May 1888

26. LT 7 May 1888

27. LT 8 May 1888

extent of public feeling that the captain of the 'Te Anau' did not allow the Chinese to land. They were taken to Port Chalmers where they were met by an enraged 'working class and larrikin element'.²⁸ From Dunedin the Chinese were transferred to Lyttelton where they boarded the 'Wareatea' which carried them to their final destination at Greymouth. E.G. East, a unionist at the time, felt that one reason why the 'yellow agony' did not land was because 'the Bluff at that time had a strong and determined Union.'²⁹ That the Chinese were able to reach their destination was, he believed, indicative of the lack of union solidarity in the country.

These events were decisive in stirring the Government into action. Atkinson introduced the Chinese Immigration Restriction Amendment Bill which, with considerable debate, became law. The Act was an appendage to the 1881 Act and raised the poll-tax to £100. Popular disruptions ended soon after the Act was passed.

The years immediately following 1888 saw important developments take place in the Labour movement. In 1889 and 1890 both the number of unions in the country and their membership increased dramatically. From some 3,000 unionists in 1888 the figure approached 60,000 by October 1890.³⁰ This revival in unionism saw the old Trades and Labour Councils emerge in strength, and the formation of a new body, the Maritime Council. The Council, under the vigorous leadership of

28. Price, The Great White Walls are Built, p210

29. Untitled newspaper clipping in the Roberts Collection dated 19 May 1906.

30. H.O. Roth, Trade Unions in New Zealand: Past and Present, Wellington. Reed Education 1973 p10.

J.A. Millar, became the country's most powerful labour body. Millar hoped that all labouring men and women would join unions that were under the Council's control.

The strength of the Council was put to the test in the Maritime Strike of 1890. The Strike, which ran from late August to mid-November ended in a resounding defeat for the Council. This defeat was a deep one and undid much of the progress made in the previous years. Many of the new unions went out of existence, and those that remained were not strong enough to be a significant force in industrial relations.

Disillusionment with industrial action saw a turning towards politics and an alliance was formed between Labour groups and the Liberals. The 1890 general election saw five 'Labour' candidates elected to Parliament. W.Tanner, D. Pinkerton, W.Earnshaw, J.Buick and J.W. Kelly, who were joined later by E. Sandford and J.A. Millar, did not form themselves into a separate Labour parliamentary group, but merged with the governing Liberals. Many Liberal parliamentarians were sympathetic to the Labour movement and supported legislation beneficial to Labour interests. Foremost among these was with Reeves who had once labelled himself a 'straight-out Socialist.' Other Liberal members intimately connected with the Labour movement were W.W. Collins, G.W. Russell, W. Hutchinson and A.W. Hogg. Many held executive positions in urban or rural unions. The Knights of Labour, an American Labour organisation, achieved some prominence in New Zealand early in the 1890's, and claimed the allegiance of fourteen Members of Parliament.

Thus while this thesis is concerned with the Labour movement and race issues it is unrealistic, in the 1890's, to neglect the part played by the Liberals in the unfolding of these issues. On one level, measures adopted by the Liberals to deal with race questions spurred various Labour bodies to action, while on another the anti-Chinese feeling of unionists encouraged Liberals in their efforts to secure restrictive legislation.

The first serious attempts to legislate against the Chinese came from the newly elected Liberal Government. In its first three years, four bills were introduced by the Government to deal with various aspects of the issue. The first, the 1891 Aliens' Bill was severely criticised in the Legislative Council for its narrow mindedness. It was, according to one member, all that could be expected from a 'working-man's Government.'³¹ Racially-discriminating legislation and other Liberal bills were rejected by Conservatives in the Upper House who, smarting from their election defeat, were determined to check progressive Liberal legislation. The Aliens' Bills of 1892 and 1893, and the 1892 Hawkers' and Peddlars' Bill received the same treatment by the Council or were neglected or discharged by the House of Representatives.

Outside Parliament agitation was limited. At a public meeting held on 10 August 1890 Labour officials spoke of the dangers of competition from cheap Chinese labour and urged a boycott of Chinese businesses.³² In March 1892 the Masterton

31. NZPD Vol 72 p 246.

32. NZT 20 August 1890

branch of the Knights of Labour passed a resolution expressing alarm at the influx of Chinese traders and workers into the Wairarapa.³³ The Association called for the assistance of sister assemblies and friends of Labour in urging the Government to increase the poll-tax to £100.

The decision of the Queensland Government in 1892 to reintroduce Kanaka labour into the sugarfields solicited a strong response from New Zealand Labour bodies. New Zealand had not had to deal with the type of climatic-racial argument that had been brought forward in Northern Australia and so did not have immediate concerns over the use of Pacific labour. The move taken by the Queensland Government was disapproved of strongly by the Australian Labour movement, which remained resolute in calling for a 'white Australia.' In early March 1892 the Wellington Trades and Labour Council, after it had received a plea for support from the New South Wales Trades Council, joined the campaign against 'black labour.'³⁴ This support was soon affirmed by the Rawhiti Association of the Knights of Labour. The Knights of Labour felt that the 'Kanaka Labour Bill' would be little better than legalised slavery, and detrimental to the well-being and interests of the various colonies.'³⁵

The issue quickly became a matter of intercolonial politics and the New Zealand Government announced that it was 'not in favour of the introduction of coloured labour

33. LT 9 March 1892

34. LT 11 March 1892

35. LT 4 May 1892

into any part of Australasia.'³⁶ When the Government then declined to take part in a conference on coloured labour, Playford, the South Australian Premier, expressed his disapproval of this action.³⁷

In Parliament Hutchinson introduced the topic, hoping that the House would urge the Queensland government to reconsider its policy.³⁸ When the matter was open to discussion Hutchinson put his objections to coloured labour on economic and humanitarian grounds. 'It is our duty,' he argued, 'on behalf of civilized labour, and more especially on behalf of the inhabitants of these islands, to express a strong opinion against the renewal of this labour traffic, which is nothing short of an outrage upon humanity.'³⁹ Hogg decried Kanaka labour as 'a species of veiled slavery in its worst and most pernicious form' and feared that if it was allowed in Queensland then it would not be long before cheap and coloured labour would be used in New Zealand.⁴⁰

Of the Labour parliamentarians to speak on the issue only Earnshaw saw it as part of wider concerns. He felt that Asians should also have been included in the Government's denunciation of coloured labour. 'The Kanaka is a doomed race, just as the Australian blacks and the Maoris are, but the race that is not doomed, and that will survive, is the Asiatic horde which it is proposed to bring into Australia,'

36. LT 3 June 1892

37. Ibid; LT 10 June 1892

38. NZPD Vol 25 P50

39. Ibid p 346.

40. Ibid p353

he stated. The future of the impending federation issue with Australia lay, Earnshaw added, in the resolving of the coloured labour question.⁴¹

It was fortuitous that Arthur Rae, a leading New South Wales Labour politician, was touring New Zealand at the time. Rae addressed many Labour organisations during his visit and explained clearly to them the issues involved with Kanaka labour. He felt that the employment of Kanakas was intended as a 'blow aimed at Unionism.'⁴² Kanakas, Coolies and 'the Chow' were, according to Rae, the employers' levers to reduce wages. If Rae's fears were realised New Zealand workers would then be faced with an influx of the 'starved out white labour of Australia.'⁴³

The appearance of a sustained campaign by the Labour movement against non-European immigration began early in 1894. In January the Wellington Trades and Labour Council expressed dismay at the 'great influx of Assyrian and Asiatic aliens' and recommended a 'very heavy poll-tax.'⁴⁴ Two weeks later the Council issued a resolution calling for the poll tax and tonnage rate to be doubled.⁴⁵

At the Trades and Labour Councils' Annual Conference, held in Auckland, the Chinese immigration question was given high priority. Allan Ward, the president of the Wellington Trades and Labour Council drew delegates attention to the

41. Ibid p356.

42. LT 23 June 1892

43. LT 13 July 1892

44. LT 19 January 1894

45. NZT 2 February 1894

entry of the Chinese into fruit-selling, market-gardening and cabinet-making. The unionists feared that, following the establishing of Chinese in these areas, the 'surplus hordes of China' would be brought to act as strike breakers.⁴⁶ This would cripple the efforts of the Labour movement which was fighting for higher wages. A poll-tax of £100 and a tonnage limit of one Chinese to one hundred tons was advocated.

Concern over Chinese immigration was not due to any increase in the number of Chinese entering the country. On 19 January 1894 the New Zealand Times, in a summary of Chinese immigration, noted that for 1893 there had been a net out-migration of 18.⁴⁷ This was confirmed in the leading article of the Lyttelton Times for 27 January which stated that 'the statistics prove that the influx is by no means so large as to be alarming.'⁴⁸ However, it continued by suggesting that 'there is no particular reason why it should continue at all.' Opposition to any Chinese immigration was the central issue for both the Lyttelton Times and the Trades and Labour Councils' Conference. At the Conference, Ward made a special note of the fact that 18 Chinese had arrived in the country during March.⁴⁹ The issue at stake was not that of a net loss or gain in New Zealand's Chinese population but rather the very fact that Chinese were arriving in the colony.

46. NZH 28 March 1894

47. Quoted in Rachagan, 'Asian Immigration to New Zealand', p 167.

48. LT 27 January 1894

49. NZH 29 March 1894

Chinese immigrants invariably went to the cities where they joined their countrymen in building up Chinese businesses. The sight of a growing Chinese community in their cities alarmed European unionists who were convinced that this meant competition for them. Labour leaders now regarded any Chinese immigration with grave suspicions as it was believed that the current immigration was the thin edge of a substantial migration that was to follow.

For a few months the urban anti-Chinese campaign remained inactive, but rumours that a Chinese furniture factory was to be started in Wellington revived it again. The New Zealand Times reported on 28 August that an Anti-Chinese Association had been formed and included large numbers of tradesmen.⁵⁰ The Association's aim was to lead a campaign against Chinese immigration and to educate the public of the dangers of trading with the 'almond-eyed foreigners.' This approach to the Chinese issue was to be developed fully over the next two years. On one hand the prevention of Asians reaching New Zealand was sought, and on the other attempts were made to isolate Chinese economic activity within the community.

The formation of the Association meant that if the campaign was to be a success it had to move out of the narrow confines of the Trades Hall and seek widespread support. On 13 September a public meeting, initiated by the Association (now with some 600 members) was held in the Wellington Skating Rink. Allan Ward, in his chairman's address, said that

50. NZT 28 August 1894

the movement was a 'crusade against the Chinese.'⁵¹ The main dangers posed by the Chinese were, according to Ward, their ability to undercut the European worker; opium smoking, and the 'ruination of young girls.' He reported that a deputation had waited on the Minister of Labour, Reeves, and legislation could be expected.

Also addressing the meeting were two Parliamentarians; J.W.Kelly, an original Labour member, and A.W.Hogg, a Liberal involved with local unions. Kelly accused the working population of being guilty of the 'sin of cheapness' and called for every effort to be made to ensure that people did not deal with the Chinese. Hogg went further, and claimed that the people of New Zealand had to decide whether the colony was to be a 'dumping ground for Celestials or for Asiatics, or whether they would preserve it for Europeans.'⁵² If the 'evil' was not attended to immediately then the colonists were, he believed, 'laying the foundations for race animosities, and possibly for a great deal of bloodshed.' A resolution calling for the Government to stop the immigration of Chinese, East Indians and coolies was carried with only two dissenting voices.

Early in October, 1894, Reeves introduced into Parliament his Undesirable Immigrants Bill. The Bill which proposed extending the tonnage restriction to 100 tons and set a £50 poll-tax was the first measure to deal with Asian

51. NZT 14 September 1894

52. Ibid

migration generally and not just the specific case of the Chinese. The Bill was favourably received by the Wellington Trades and Labour Council which urged other Labour bodies throughout the country to give their support.⁵³ In Christchurch the local Council deferred giving its opinion until it had studied a copy of the Bill.⁵⁴ In late October the Bill was discharged, and throughout the country the question of Asian immigration lapsed.

The parliamentary phase of the 1894 anti-Chinese campaign, although unsuccessful, was an important preparatory stage for the campaign of the following year. Reeves later claimed that the 1894 Bill had been 'brought forward to familiarise the country' with the Chinese issue.⁵⁵ For Reeves the desire to deal with this issue was strengthened early in 1895. Travelling on the S.S. 'Port Melbourne' from Sydney to New Zealand, Reeves was a passenger on a vessel manned by a Lascar crew. The sight of their 'dark faces' distressed Reeves and aggravated the pangs of his 'mel de mer'.⁵⁶ He returned to the colony strong in his resolve to keep New Zealand a white man's country.

At a Trades Council meeting held in Wellington early in February, the campaign began in earnest. Reeves informed the gathering that the State had the right to check any influx of alien races, such as the Chinese.⁵⁷ Such action

53. NZH 9 October 1894

54. CTLC Ordinary Minutes 3 November 1894

55. NZPD Vol 89 p345.

56. Press 11 January 1895

57. NZT 26 January 1895

was justified on the grounds that the government had to protect the interests of the people. Concern over the Anglo-Japanese Treaty also occupied union leaders in early February. Having issued an earlier condemnation of the Treaty,⁵⁸ the Wellington Trades Council sought the support of its sister bodies. In response to a request from the Wellington body the Canterbury Council endorsed the former's resolution and forwarded its own objection to Seddon.⁵⁹

The Treaty, signed between Great Britain and Japan in July 1894, gave the option for the New Zealand Government to become a party to it. The Councils' protests were timely, as Seddon's Government had not reached a decision on the matter. Concern over the treaty lay in the first and third articles which would have given Japanese citizens the right of unrestricted entry, residence and freedom to pursue any occupation or conduct any business in New Zealand.⁶⁰ These provisions were a direct threat to the immigration and employment policies of the Labour movement with regard to Asians. Reeves stated quite plainly that 'the introduction of Japanese coolies, market gardeners and retail traders would not be desirable and could not be tolerated.'⁶¹ The Government, heeding the protests, decided against adhering to the treaty.

With Reeves actively seeking the support of Labour organisations the anti-Chinese campaign gathered momentum.

58. Press 12 January 1895

59. CTLC Correspondence 2 February 1895, 6 February 1895.

60. M.P. Lissington, New Zealand and Japan, 1900-1941, Wellington, Government Printer 1972 p2.

61. Reeves to Seddon 27 November 1895, quoted in above.

At a special meeting of the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council on 9 February 1895 Reeves discussed with members legislation he planned to introduce into Parliament during the year. These included the Master and Apprentices' Bill, the Servants' Registry Bill and the Undesirable Immigrants Bill.⁶²

Secure in the Council's approval for his policies Reeves put to the public the case for stringent legislation against Chinese. At a public meeting held in Christchurch on 12 February Reeves discussed, among other issues, his plans for restricting Asian immigration. In his speech he disclosed his aim of creating a New Zealand that was 'white, civilized, educated and clean.'⁶³ To achieve this it was essential that the entry of undesirables be checked. This list of 'undesirables' comprised of lunatics, criminals, diseased people, paupers and racial minorities.

The focus of the anti-Chinese movement remained in Christchurch when the Trades and Labour Councils held their annual conference in the city during April. Reeves's discharged 1894 Bill was discussed extensively by delegates. Virtually all clauses were agreed to, although minor amendments, including provisions for the photographing of Asians, were added.⁶⁴ The Conference concluded its discussion with a recognition of the imperative necessity of measures to prevent the 'indiscriminate influx of undesirable immigrants.'

62. CTLC Special Meeting. Minutes 9 February 1895

63. Press 12 February 1895

64. TLC Report of Annual Conference 1895 p12

The extensive publicity given to Chinese immigration in Christchurch precipitated the formation of an anti-Chinese league in the city. Steps towards establishing this body took place on 24 April when the local Liberal Association sponsored an anti-Chinese meeting. The meeting was held at the Theatre Royal which, according to a press report, was crowded.⁶⁵ Old campaigners like Reeves, W.W.Collins and G.W. Russell were prominent. The leading Labour representative was W.I.Ballinger, president of the Carriers' Union, and president of the Progressive Liberal Association. The mood of the gathering was best summed up by the editorial in the Lyttelton Times for 25 April when it was stated that the 'meeting resolved most emphatically to be anti-Asiatic.' At the conclusion of the meeting an Anti-Chinese League was formed.

On 7 June support was boosted when Christchurch green-grocers and market gardeners, allegedly facing Chinese competition, publically declared for the League. At a meeting chaired by W.Collins, president of the local branch of the New Zealand Workers' Union, members from the local Liberal Association, Fruiterers' and Market gardeners' Association, New Zealand Workers' Union, and various womens social and political groups consolidated the anti-Chinese campaign.⁶⁶ At this meeting the Anti-Chinese League issued its two key objectives. The first was a propaganda one and committed the League to informing the public on the Chinese

65. LT 25 April 1895

66. NZT 8 June 1895

issue. The second was to support the legislative efforts to restrict Chinese and other 'undesirables competition in the colony's labour markets.' The following line of action was proposed:

...raising the poll-tax on Chinese to at least £100, by enforcing the inspection of premises occupied by Chinese and other Asiatics, by urging the Government to refuse mail subsidies to any steamer or other vessels carrying, as a whole or part of the crew, any Asiatic, Lascar or Kanaka, by members pledging themselves and inducing others, not to deal with any Asiatic grower, ...vendor and manufacturer.

The presence of W.F. Ballinger in the anti-Chinese campaign stemmed from difficulties that the Carriers' Union had been having with Chinese. In March the Wellington Carriers' Union had complained of the way in which some Chinese had tried to cut rates.⁶⁷ A few months later it was reported that Chinese had applied for licenses to act as carriers and this drew a strong protest from the Union which complained that the competition would be unfair.⁶⁸ When D. Orr, the vice-President of the Wellington Carriers' Union was in Christchurch in late June, he raised the issue of Chinese applying for carrier's licences at a meeting of the Christchurch Carriers' Union. The members of the Union expressed their entire sympathy with the Wellington Union.

The final chapter in the episode between the Carriers' Union and the Chinese occurred early in 1896. In February of that year a group of carriers attacked some Chinese who were passing by their shelter sheds.⁶⁹ The Union executive

67. Press 8 March 1895

68. Press 21 June 1895

69. NZT 28 February 1896

disclaimed responsibility for this act of violence and called it a 'cowardly attack.' Although this spontaneous venting of feeling by some rank and file unionists was an isolated incident in the union's campaign, it showed that antipathy to the Chinese was not confined just to rhetoric, but given the circumstance, could be expressed in unacceptable ways.

When Reeves gave his Asiatic and other Immigrants Bill its first reading on 3 July, 1895 the anti-Chinese campaign was now in full swing. A meeting, convened by D.Orr was held at the Wellington Trades Hall on 24 July, after the secretary of the Christchurch Anti-Chinese League had asked the public in Wellington for support. Among those present at the meeting were A.Ward, J.Mercier, of the New Zealand Workers' Union, and Ballinger. Ballinger spoke on the necessity to educate the public on the 'Chinese question' and to this end a public meeting was planned.⁷⁰

This meeting, held on 3 August, was particularly alarmist about the situation. A motion introduced by Ward summed up the feelings of those present. The motion expressed deep concern at the 'rapid inroads made upon our social and moral life by Asiatics and other unsuitable immigration.'⁷¹ Legislation was urged 'thereby preventing any further increase of this terrible blot on our civilization.'

Reeves, in his address to the meeting, claimed that it was not a narrow, union question that was being faced but

70. NZT 25 July 1895

71. NZT 5 August 1895

one that affected the whole of New Zealand, future generations included. While acknowledging the fact that the Chinese were industrious he argued that this was an insufficient reason to allow their entry into the country. Baboons, he claimed, could also be industrious but they had one advantage over the Chinese for when they, unlike the Chinese got troublesome, they could be killed off. Chinese were a threat not only to the economic sphere of society but to every area.

Reeves' strong words captured perfectly the prejudice of those at the meeting. Delegates from the Women's Democratic Union, Women's Social and Political League, Seamen's Union, Carriers' Union, Bakers' Union and Cabman's Union supported a series of resolutions moved to deal with the problem. The measures proposed include a call for the poll tax to be raised, the refusal of further naturalization to Asians and the boycotting of Asian traders. Designed to estrange the Chinese from the Community, these proposals expressed clearly the antagonism of the Europeans towards Asian immigration.

Although Ward, in his chairman's address, denied that the Anti-Chinese League was part of a union movement, it was clear from the active role taken by union leaders in the meeting that the origins of the League lay in mainstream trade unionism. In a letter to W. Belcher, W. Jones, secretary of the Wellington branch of the Seamen's Union, stated that the League was formed by 'members of the various unions.⁷²

72. WSU Correspondence. Jones to Belcher 3 September 1895

In Parliament W.Collins stated that the 'Anti-Chinese League has been formed by the workers and for the workers.'⁷³ Ward's assertion that the campaign was not a 'union movement' must, then, be seen as a political statement that endeavoured to win wide popular support for the League, and in this he was successful. In early August the membership of the League stood at about 300⁷⁴ and by 3 September Jones reported to Belcher that the League had progressed and was working towards a boycott of Chinese grocers.⁷⁵

When his Asiatic and other Immigrants Restriction Bill was introduced into Parliament in 1895 Reeves, secure in knowing that he had widespread public support, was able to present his case for exclusion forcefully. In his opening remarks he claimed that the basic principles behind the Bill had been enthusiastically received by Labour leaders in Melbourne, the hot bed of Australian anti-Chinese agitation. Reeves defended his own initiative in the legislation by claiming that the Bill emerged because of 'national necessity' and was not a 'pandering to the New Zealand Labour organisations.'

On 7 October a public meeting held in Wellington under the auspices of the New Zealand Workers' Union discussed the

73. NZPD Vol 89 p362

74. Jones to Belcher 12 August 1895

75. Jones to Belcher 3 September 1895

76. NZPD Vol 89 p345

Bill. Ward, the chairman, emphasised the importance of the anti-Chinese Bill in the context of the Government's programme of progressive legislation. 'Coloured peoples, barbarians, cheap labour, criminals, lunatics and undesirable people of all classes' if allowed to enter New Zealand would undo much of Labour's gains achieved through legislation.⁷⁷ At another Wellington meeting held later in the month Collins called the Bill the 'foremost Labour Bill of the day'.⁷⁸

The second meeting saw a clear declaration of support among unions for restrictive legislation. Executive officers of the Trades Council; Typographical Society, Bakers', Carriers', Bootmakers'. Bookbinders', Tailors', Tailoresses', Boilermakers', Workers', Seamen's, Fruiterers' and Painters' unions united to form a deputation to Seddon. The trade union movement had unequivocally declared its protest over the 'yellow agony'. Labour antipathy to non-European immigrants was showing itself to be a powerful force in fostering trade union solidarity in New Zealand.

The Anti-Chinese League which had campaigned so strongly throughout 1895 did not meet from October that year to February 1896. When activities were resumed with a meeting on 5 February, there was an apologetic manner in the way business was conducted. For some time rumours had been circulating that the League had gone out of existence. The People had asked the question; 'Is it dead? Week after week passes by and no meetings are held, nor do we see any prac-

77. NZT 8 October 1895

78. NZT 22 October 1895

tical result as the outcome of the large amount of talk that was indulged in by the members.'⁷⁹ A. Collins, the president of the League, made a special point of dispelling the rumours. In a statement he said that 'the Committee wishes to point out that after the dissolution of Parliament the officers of the League felt that the strain upon their time and health had been so great that it was impossible to continue.'⁸⁰ It had been decided to take a rest until after the New Year, at which time the League would come back 'with renewed energy to prosecute the work which had been left unfinished.'

The parent body of the League, the Wellington Trades Council, issued, the following day, a statement on the necessity of passing legislation that would deal with the 'question of Asiatics and other Aliens.'⁸¹ The Council's concern at this time stemmed from the presentation of papers that had been given at a Medical Conference in Dunedin. One of the papers had discussed the problem of tuberculosis and the Council used this as an occasion to call attention to the dangers of Asian immigration. That the Conference itself did not establish any link between tuberculosis and Asian immigration suggests that the Council's complaints were without foundation. Nevertheless, Seddon, heeding the Council's statement, wrote promising to introduce his Asiatic and other Immigrants Restriction Bill.⁸²

79. People 30 November 1895 p27

80. NZT 6 February 1896

81. NZT 7 February 1896

82. NZT 20 February 1896

Despite A.Collins' claim that the League was still functioning, and despite the Trade Council's renewed efforts to raise the cry against the Chinese, it was clear that they would not be able to repeat their campaigns of the previous two years. Financially, the Anti-Chinese League was not in a healthy situation. The fact that, early in 1896, it had liabilities of £5:1.6. and cash on hand of £4:2.0,⁸³ indicated that its support base was not very active. The League through the retirement of its founding chairman, Allan Ward, had undergone a minor but significant leadership change. Ward at this time in his career was a highly influential leader in both Labour circles and the wider community.⁸⁴ His successor, Collins, while also a leading union official and a director of the New Zealand Times, did not wield as much political power in the Labour movement.

Also significant in the League's decline was the appointment of Reeves as New Zealand Agent-General in London. The League's growth and progress in 1895 owed a great deal to the enthusiasm and support that Reeves gave to the anti-Chinese campaigns. With his departure the League, and the whole movement, lost a lot of its vision and momentum. This decline was accentuated by a weakening of the Liberal-Labour political alliance. Under Seddon, the Trades Councils did not exercise as much influence over government policy as they had done when Reeves was Minister of Labour.⁸⁵ Although

83. NZT 11 February 1896

84. People 12 October 1895

85. Roth, Trade Unions in New Zealand, p22

Seddon himself continued to battle to legislate for a White New Zealand, much more initiative was coming from Parliament, rather than from collaboration with the Labour movement.

The decline of the League revealed one of the key problems of the anti-Chinese campaigns of the 1890's. The anti-Chinese movement in New Zealand never resembled a mass movement, able to generate a self-sustaining and dynamic impetus. In the mid-1890's particularly the campaign against Asian immigration relied heavily on the skills of a few individuals. Allan Ward, Reeves, W.Collins and Ballinger were prominent in most of the important facets of the campaigns. Although they were undeniably successful in soliciting widespread support from the Labour movement and wider community, the feeling generated by this element was invariably short-lived. Spontaneous outbursts of anti-Chinese feeling did occur, but they were on the periphery of the movement.

In Christchurch anti-Chinese feeling was rekindled through the agency of the Fruiterers' Association. A meeting was called by the Fruiterers' and included delegates from the Anti-Chinese League, the European Market Gardener Association and the Fruit Growers Association.⁸⁶ The meeting dealt with ways of combating 'unfair' Chinese competition following allegations that Chinese traders were selling produce at less than cost price. At this early stage of the Christchurch interest only the Cabinetmakers represented the union movement.⁸⁷

86. LT 18 February 1896

87. LT 27 February 1896

The involvement of W.W.Collins in the discussions was in his capacity as President of the Anti-Chinese League, not as a union delegate.

At a meeting held on 2 March a delegate from the Boot-makers' Union was present and offered his union's assistance to the League.⁸⁸ The interest shown by the Bootmakers' Union at this meeting is particularly interesting. Their support for the League came at a time when union involvement in the Christchurch anti-Chinese campaign was not very great. The local Trades Council, usually the main voice-piece of Labour organisations in the city, had been silent over the Chinese issue. Further, the boot industry experienced no direct competition with Asians, nor were there any rumours of Asian involvement in the trade. Economic grievances against Chinese are, therefore, inappropriate to account for the Union's interest in anti-Chinese groups. The boot workers at this time were suffering from the problem of low wages, mechanisation and the general decline of small, craft industries,⁸⁹ and these difficulties best explain their discontent. That the Chinese were the object of the Union's frustrations stemmed from prevailing racial attitudes which condoned the laying the blame for troubles at a racially distinct group in society.

A correspondent to the Lyttelton Times wrote to the paper outlining some of the difficulties that the League would have in its campaign. L.H.Rogers, the president of the

88. LT 3 March 1896

89. Ibid

local branch of the New Zealand Workers' Union, felt that one difficulty lay in the fact that it was mostly the working classes who patronised the Chinese, the wealthy generally trading with the older, established shops.⁹⁰ Rogers saw that in Christchurch at least the union movement was not as active in the campaigns as he felt possible and that if the unions combined then progress to 'crush the Chinese inroads' would be made.

In Dunedin there was one brief outburst of protest against the Chinese by local Labour groups. In September a rumour was circulating that a Chinese furniture factory was to be established in the city.⁹¹ The Dunedin Trades and Labour Council promised to give every assistance to the Cabinet Trade Union in the face of this threat. It was recommended that a conference should be held with employers to consider the most effective means of combating the 'cheap, Chinese-made furniture.' Alexander Don, a local churchman active in the Chinese community, dismissed the rumours at a public meeting. The true position, he claimed, was that some Chinese manufacturers in Melbourne had enquired as to the possibilities of selling Australian-made furniture in Dunedin.⁹² As it became clear that the threat was non-existent the unions' concern quickly subsided.

Seddon's legislative efforts for the year consisted of four bills; the Asiatic Restriction Bill (Number 1), the

90. LT 13 March 1896

91. Press 4 September 1896

92. Press 27 September 1896

Undesirable Hawkers' Prevention Bill; the Asiatic Restriction Bill (Number 2); and the Chinese Immigrants Bill. The Undesirable Hawkers' Prevention Bill was designed to prohibit Asians from participating in the hawking and peddling trades. The others sought to deal with the problem of Asian immigration to New Zealand. None of the four bills was successful.

In contrast to previous years the Labour movement's interest in the legislative aspects of the 1896 anti-Chinese campaign was rather tame. Although Seddon's efforts were approved and appreciated by Labour groups the intense rhetoric was absent. The main expression of interest came in April when eleven unfederated unions waited on Seddon to discuss labour legislation which was to be introduced in the upcoming session. Included in their requests was the establishment of a £100 poll-tax.⁹³ When Seddon's first Asiatic Restriction Bill was defeated the Wellington Trades Council expressed its indignation, claiming that the rejection was 'a direct slap in the face not only to the Government, but also to all those institutions having for their object the social and moral improvement of the masses generally.'⁹⁴ When the second and more moderate bill passed the Legislative Council the Trades Council sent a letter congratulating Seddon on his success.⁹⁵

93. LT 16 April 1896

94. NZT 3 July 1896

95. NZT 4 September 1896

The quest to find effective legislation to curb Asian immigration continued in the years following 1896. In the next three years, Seddon introduced four bills to Parliament, finally reaching an acceptable formula in 1899 with the Immigration Restriction Act. The Act, based on legislation adopted in Natal, imposed a language test on immigrants not of British or Irish parentage.⁹⁶ The poll-tax and tonnage limitation provisions were retained for Chinese immigrants.

One of the features of this latter phase of the exclusion movement of the 1890's was the total quiescence of the Labour movement. No public meetings were held, there were no union deputations to government and the issue was not discussed at important Labour conventions. The intense feeling of the years 1894-6 contrasted markedly with the silence of the period from 1897-1899.

The reasons for this are not immediately clear but lie in a mixture of economic changes and the campaigners' inability to counter basic internal weaknesses of the anti-Chinese movement. The eclipse of the campaigns followed the similar decline in the anti-Chinese League in Wellington. The loss of key leaders removed one of the important forces that had given the campaigns their strength. By late 1896 the motivation among existing agitators had lost momentum and, with the inevitability of legislation being secured, one of the primary aims of the campaigns was realised.

96. P.O'Connor "Keeping New Zealand White 1908-1920", NZJH Vol 11 April 1968 pp 41-65

1895 has been regarded as the termination point of the Long Depression. From 1878-1895 the New Zealand economy was characterized by an extended period of low wages, unemployment and poverty.⁹⁷ These economic and social factors had played an important part in fostering antipathy to Chinese immigrants. In years when economic conditions were particularly bad, for example, 1879 and 1888, anti-Chinese agitation in the country peaked. With the arrival of better conditions after 1899 there was less need for finding a suitable scapegoat for the country's ills. As the economy picked up so the intensity of Labour's anti-Chinese agitation waned.

The relation between economic factors and the anti-Chinese campaigns was an important one. Chinese immigration was vigorously resisted by trade unionists on the grounds that cheap Chinese labour was a threat, actual and potential, to the wages and living standards of the European worker. Awareness of this threat was magnified in depression times when unemployment made the working class more sensitive to their position in the economic structure.

The ability of the Chinese to work for low wages was regarded as the product of a number of characteristics of the Chinese. Agitators felt that the sharing of accommodation, single condition and an ability to 'live on the smell of an oil rag'⁹⁸ gave the Chinese an unfair advantage in the labour market. By adopting a much lower standard of living from the

97. W.J.Gardner, "A Colonial Economy" In W.H. Oliver ed, The Oxford History of New Zealand, Wellington. U.U.P.
pp 57-86 : p75

98. NZPD Vol 94 p312

European worker the Chinese were able to work for lower wages. According to Reeves the white labourer had to live respectably, support his wife, educate his children, wear decent clothes, maintain his property and support public charities.⁹⁹ For these reasons he was significantly handicapped in his competition with the Chinese who did not have to carry these burdens.

This economic threat was accentuated by two qualities of the Chinese which, when applied to Europeans were virtues, but when attributed to the Chinese were abominable vices. The Chinese propensity to save was talked of with repugnance by antagonists. 'Fabian Black' writing in a Labour orientated monthly paper, Fair Play, claimed that Chinese thrift 'does not promote or sustain life, it destroys it.'¹⁰⁰ Anti-Chinese campaigners also highlighted the Chinese reputation for hard work which, unlike the industry of New Zealanders, was regarded as being divorced from responsible social behaviour. O'Conner put the case most succinctly in 1893 when he alleged that the European

could not compete in industrial work with the Asiatic, living upon a lower plane and working longer hours - making themselves perfect slaves to whatever occupation they worked at, and living upon a kind of sustenance that would not suit our people.¹⁰¹

Asian immigrants were not the only group singled out by trade unionists as an economic threat. Many of Reeves' bills dealt with other groups that it was felt endangered

99. NZPD Vol 89 p347

100. Fair Play 1 October 1894 p32

101. NZPD Vol 81 p828

the stability of the labour market. The Wellington Anti-Chinese League had as one of its aims the restriction of 'Chinese and other undesirable competitors.'¹⁰² In this category came groups such as children, women, pauper and convict labour. All were regarded as being used by employers to weaken the position of organised labour. General Booth's plans for 'self-help' co-operatives were greatly feared on the grounds that colonists did not want their countries made a dumping ground for the 'diseased and vicious paupers' of Europe.¹⁰³ Earnshaw argued in Parliament against Italian and Austrian labour on the basis of New Zealand's 'right to defend our labour-market.'¹⁰⁴

The Austrians, who were employed as diggers on the Northern gumfields, were the focus of strong opposition throughout the 1890's. Many of the objections raised against the Chinese were also raised against the Dalmatian gumdiggers. Both groups were sojourners, both worked in small groups, remitted money to their homelands, gambled, lived frugally and spoke little English.¹⁰⁵ It was not surprising then that contemporaries called the Dalmatians the 'Chinese of the north.'

One of the aims of nineteenth century craft unionism was to regulate the supply of labour and the anti-Chinese fervour exhibited within these circles can be partly explained

102. NZT 8 June 1895

103. Otago Workman 16 April 1896

104. NZPD Vol 89 p366

105. B.W.Marshall, 'Kauri gum digging, 1885-1920, a study of sectional and ethnic tensions,' Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Auckland 1968 p172.

by this factor. The alliance with the Liberals and the labour legislation of the 1890's had made many unionists feel that Labour was reaching a place of security within the country's economic and social structures. Any group seen as a threat to the advances made was resisted with vigour. The leaders of the Labour movement felt that 'it was no good getting an eight-hour day and other benefits if the Chinese were dumped down on these shores in any quantity.' The workers of New Zealand had 'a right to have some legislation passed to prevent the country being flooded with the "yellow agony"'.¹⁰⁶ Seen in this way the unions' anti-Chinese movement was a defensive one, which aimed at preserving the gains made by Labour and to ensure that its position in the community was not undermined.

Working class fear of Asian competition is however inadequate to account for the nature of the anti-Chinese campaigns. The economic argument does not explain the support given to the movement by unions which, within their sphere of operations, had no contact with Chinese workers. Further the campaigns were characterised by emotive judgments and unfounded accusations concerning the Chinese which were inconsistent with rational, economic objections. There is little evidence to suggest that the threat to the European work force can be substantiated. The furniture trade unions were one group that frequently expressed fears of Chinese competition, but their rhetoric contained few solid facts. In 1896 there were four Chinese cabinetmakers in New Zealand,

106. NZT 22 October 1895

and over 1,100 European workers. The number of Chinese workers in this case is so insignificant that a threat on the scale presented cannot be validated.

The working class fear of Chinese immigration undoubtedly had its economic component but this fear was also produced by racial consciousness. The trade union movement understood clearly that the problem of Chinese immigration was not a simple labour one. They knew that they were embroiled in a struggle between the races and that the racial and economic issues could not be separated but were fundamentally intertwined. The economic objections to the Chinese were based on certain racial assumptions. Behind the fear of Chinese cheap labour was the inference that all Chinese worked for low wages and therefore any member of the Chinese race engaged in employment constituted a threat. Statements that '"John" has a hereditary habit of living cheaper',¹⁰⁷ and that the Chinese was 'slavish in his nature'¹⁰⁸ illustrate this. Chinese servility, thrift and capacity for work were held to be innate and immutable qualities found in all Chinese.

The anti-Chinese campaigners were fully aware that the particular problem of Chinese immigration transcended the under case for protection in the labour market. While cheap labour in all its forms was opposed, Chinese labour was regarded as being an issue of greater importance. Although

107. LT 6 April 1896

108. NZT 18 December 1878

the economic arguments against the Yugoslav gumdiggers and Chinese were similar, trade unionists in the campaigns understood clearly the distinction between the two groups. Earnshaw stated that the Labour movement had no objection to immigration from any country in Europe 'under proper conditions,' that is if it was immigration of the Caucasian race, and would not threaten the labour market.¹⁰⁹ However, in this context, Earnshaw added in reference to the Chinese: 'we are determined that New Zealand shall be a country for white labour and that we will not have it mixed with this degenerate race, and degenerate it is in every possible way you can think of.' The leaders of the anti-Chinese movement did not confuse the two issues. Chinese immigration was regarded as a substantially greater evil because it involved the migration of a race that differed fundamentally in kind from the European stock.¹¹⁰

The inadequacies of economic explanations to account for the nineteenth century anti-Chinese campaigns can be seen in the relation of the Chinese to unionism. It was widely held that, because they worked for low wages the Chinese were the enemies of unionism, which sought to enhance the position of the worker. To this was added the belief that Chinese would be used as strike-breakers, further threatening the progress of the union movement.¹¹¹ If, in fact, the griev-

109. NZPD Vol 69 p366

110. Of the Europeans there is some evidence that the fears of the 'poor and diseased of Europe' had biological connotations but this is not as extensive as that related to Chinese immigration.

111. NZH 26 March 1894

ances against the Chinese were economic only, then the logical line of action to follow would be to organise the Chinese into unions. This would protect the white worker from the Chinese being paid low wages and ensure that Chinese 'scabs' would not be used in industrial pursuits. However the union movement in New Zealand did not respond in this way to the alleged Chinese threat, and instead adopted strict racialist policies.

Two important unions in nineteenth-century New Zealand were the Seamen's Union and the Shearers', later the Workers' Union. Both had close links with Australia, with the latter a branch of the Amalgamated Shearers' Union of Australia. Organisers from Australia were regularly working among seamen and rural workers in New Zealand. Thus when branches were established in New Zealand they based their constitutions on those formed in Australia. For these two unions this meant that the New Zealand branches inherited constitutions that specifically refused membership to non-European, non-Native race groups. The Australian Workers' Union stated in 1894 that:

this union shall be open to all bona fide wage earners, male or female, except Chinese, Japanese, Kanakas, Afghans, and other coloured aliens. (This shall not apply to Aborigines, Maoris, American Negroes, or to children of mixed marriages born in Australasia.)¹¹²

The following year the New Zealand Workers' Union upheld this principle when, at its annual conference, it passed a resolution denying Chinese admission to the Union.¹¹³

112. A. Markus, 'Talka Longa Mouth: Aborigines and the Labour movement 1890-1970', in Who are our enemies?, pp 138-157, p140-141.

113. NZT 20 April 1895.

Similarly, the New Zealand Seamen's Union carried on the Australian workers' battle against Chinese labour. When George Sangster visited New Zealand in 1880, setting up local branches, he made reference to the competition posed by Chinese-manned ships.¹¹⁴ The Australian seamen after the 1878 strike, were keen to have the co-operation of their fellow colonials in the fight against Chinese labour. Thus the Federated Seamen's Union of New Zealand was formed and, like the Shearers', it forbade Chinese membership. In 1889 John Laurenson proposed that coloured labour be allowed into the Union. The proposal was rejected at a general meeting of the Wellington branch of the Union by a unanimous vote.¹¹⁵ Later in the year there was the incident of a Malay seaman, with a Spanish name, nearly enrolling as a member. The Wellington secretary, McCaull, in a letter to J. Grady, commented that, if the Malay had been admitted, it would have violated 'all our principles.'¹¹⁶

At other times during the campaigns opposition to Asians was expressed in a more explicit biological racism. In Parliament Earnshaw suggested that the Chinese matter centred around the key question as to whether 'the race is a fit race to blend with ours. If it is not, we have, upon the broad lines of a race-struggle for existence and supremacy as a basis, a right to keep them out.'¹¹⁷ This criteria was applic-

114. C. Bollinger, Against the Wind; the story of the New Zealand Seamen's Union, Wellington. New Zealand Seamen's Union 1968 p7.

115. WSU General Meeting 8 July 1889

116. WSU Correspondence McCaull to Grady 14 August 1889

117. NZPD Vol 89 p366.

able to Chinese, 'Assyrians', Japanese and Negroes - 'four races absolutely out of touch with our civilization.' In his view they would 'not mix or blend with our race - the hybrid product being worse than the pure race.'¹¹⁸

The working class in New Zealand was exposed to this race ideology often. When Arthur Rae toured New Zealand he espoused strong arguments against coloured labour.

'Indiscriminate admixture of white and coloured races inevitably results in the degeneracy and degradation of the physical, mental, moral and social status of both races,' he wrote, adding that this was 'trebly intensified when it results from the contact of a superior, dominant race with an inferior, servile people.'¹¹⁹

Racism was an essential ingredient in the Labour movement's hostility to Chinese and other Asian groups. Although the intellectual arguments for this tended to be confined to the higher ranks of Labour, the rank and file accepted these views unhesitatingly, and by their actions showed their own sense of race consciousness. Tudehope spoke for many unionists when, at the 1894 Trades and Labour Conference, he declared 'I have detested the sight of the Chinese from the first time I saw one.'¹²⁰ For Tudehope, like Reeves, this prejudice may have been the product of personal and psychological factors but at the same time it reflected a society where racial prejudice was 'a special kind of convenient rationalizations for rewarding behaviour.'¹²¹

118. NZPD Vol 92 p255.

119. LT 3 July 1892

120. NZH 26 March 1894

121. P. Van den Berghe, Race and Racism; a comparative perspective. N.Y. Wiley 1967. p21.

Such views were widely accepted in the late nineteenth century. The application of Darwin's ideas on biology to social contact had given a pseudo-scientific justification for prejudice against non-White groups. The biological element in inter-group relations became particularly important during talk of the 'struggle of the races.' Anthropologists, social scientists and biologists now felt that they had a firm 'scientific' basis to talk of innately inferior and superior races. The dangers of allowing allegedly inferior races to come to New Zealand was, therefore, of major concern to politicians and informed Labour leaders. The contact with and possible intermixture of these inferior races with the superior, white race was regarded with horror by the race purists. J.Rigg believed that, should the inferior Chinese come to New Zealand, the white race 'shall surely degenerate.'¹²²

In the campaigns the racial and cultural objections to the Chinese merged. The Chinese race was regarded as inherently inferior and subsequently, their civilization was seen as being of an inferior composition. The laws, language, institutions, and religion of the Anglo-Saxons were held to be the highest expression of human achievement. Contact with members of a lower civilization meant that 'the advance of civilization' in New Zealand would be threatened, and the country would 'lose its glorious prestige as one of the best and foremost countries in the world.'¹²³

122. NZPD Vol 91 p814.

123. NZPD Vol 110 p464

W.W. Collins argued, in 1890, that 'on account of racial purity, and on the grounds of civilization it is absolutely necessary that the further influx of Chinese should be severely restricted.'¹²⁴ The future of the superior, white civilization in New Zealand had to be protected at all costs.

The early relations of Europeans and Chinese in New Zealand emphasised the requirements of capital. In the 1893 Chinese importation scheme and the Otago Provincial Council, Chinese immigration was highly desirable because it filled a labour shortage and would profit vested interests in the colony. Opposition from the working class at these times stemmed primarily from economic concerns. By the end of the century the attitudes of different sections in society towards Chinese immigration were less well drawn. The campaigns of the 1890's were characterized by the predominance of the trade unions in providing leadership and organisation, but there was also a strong cross-class element. Sometimes an outburst of protest was a community effort, with the working class combining with manufacturers, shopkeepers and professionals. More than once agitated unionists sought to meet the oncoming threat by united action with the employers. The latter group, often finding the Asian 'menace' equally disturbing, especially on racial and social grounds, were willing to lend their assistance.

The cross class aspect of the campaigns was a reflection on the impact that national consciousness had on anti-Chinese feeling. By the late nineteenth century conditions

124. NZPD Vol 92 p256.

were facilitating the growth of New Zealand nationalism. The growth of a New Zealand-born generation signalled the end of the 'era of colonialism' and made the need for a national identity impelling. Vogel, Grey and Seddon had all formulated a type of New Zealand 'colonial imperialism' which saw New Zealand as an entity charged with a mission in the Pacific.¹²⁵ The sense of national consciousness and race consciousness were mutual influences on each other. Racism expressed towards Asians fostered the growing national awareness and this in turn strengthened the anti-Chinese movement.¹²⁶

In Parliament anti-Chinese Legislation was often urged on the basis of national interest. When O'Connor introduced the 1893 Aliens' Bill he stressed the importance of making 'New Zealand for the New Zealanders.'¹²⁷ To be a true New Zealander an essential qualification was one's racial characteristics. The country was not to be a 'hotch-potch of nationalities - Asiatic, European, Polynesian, Malay' but rather it was to be composed of European, preferably British people.¹²⁸ Purity of the race and the vitality of the nation were regarded as inseparable. The Chinese, as an inferior race, were undesirable ingredients in the process of nation building. They were an 'unprogressive people'¹²⁹

125. J.C.Beaglehole, "The Development of New Zealand Nationality", Journal of World History v.2(1) pp106-123 p112.

126. D.Bedggood, Rich and Poor in New Zealand: a critique of class, politics and ideology, Auckland, Allen and Unwin 1980 p83.

127. NZPD Vol 81 p329

128. NZPD Vol 94 p311-16

129. NZPD Vol 59 p362

and took 'no part in... national and municipal affairs.'¹³⁰

The strength of the anti-Chinese campaigns, especially those of the 1890's, owed a great deal to the degree to which leaders in the Labour movement saw political gain in the issue. The 1890 Maritime Strike had been a set-back to the trade union movement and weakened it considerably. Membership was low, many unions had been disbanded and the leadership lacked a radical approach. In this context the anti-Chinese movement can be seen as an attempt by union leaders to strengthen their position in the political structure. Further, the long-standing commitment of the Labour movement against Chinese immigration was well utilized by Liberal politicians such as Reeves, who were seeking support for their reforms and careers. The political advantages of the anti-Chinese campaigns were significant to both parties of the Liberal-Labour alliance.

The Wellington Trades and Labour Council, because of its proximity to the seat of government, manipulated anti-Chinese feeling to its own political advantage. Of all the Labour organisations involved in the campaigns, the Council was the most vocal and determined in its efforts to 'shut the gates'. The Council, through its president Ward and other leading unionists, was in regular contact with Reeves and often petitioned the Government to introduce restrictive legislation. It was effective in encouraging similar bodies in other centres to join the exclusionist movement, although its main successes in this way were with the southern Trades

130. NZPD Vol 94 p314

Councils, Auckland Labour bodies were usually silent over the issue.

In 1895 the Wellington Council expressed its intentions to make political use of the Chinese immigration issue. The Council, vexed by 'certain members of the Liberal party' for opposing the Undesirable Immigrants Bill and Fair Tenders Bill, was watching the offending members and intended circulating copies of their speeches in their constituencies. The purpose of this was to undermine the politicians' efforts in the forthcoming elections.¹³¹ The Canterbury Council, regretful of the failure of the legislation, refused to endorse this action. This response was ill-received by the Wellington Council which wrote to Christchurch and expressed 'astonishment at the apathy' shown by the southern body.¹³² In the opinion of the Canterbury councillors the use of the Chinese issue for political capital would be damaging to the Labour movement as it would be unlikely to gain 'the esteem and confidence of those we represent.'¹³³

Working class opposition to Chinese immigration began in 1878 under the shadow of widespread anti-Chinese feeling in Australia. The Australasian aspect of the New Zealand anti-Chinese movement continued through the following years and was an important factor in the New Zealand campaigns. The nature of the anti-Chinese campaigns of the Australian Labour movement has been set down in a number of writings.¹³⁴

131. CTLC Ordinary Minutes 5 October 1895

132. Ibid 2 November 1895

133. CTLC Correspondence 5 November 1895

134. A. Markus, Fear and Hatred: purifying Australia and California 1850-1901, Sydney, Hale and Iremonger 1979; Price, The Great White Walls are Built; A. Curtheys and A. Markus, Who are our enemies?

The most thorough of these show the extent to which virulent racism was a feature of the fight for a 'White Australia.' This strong sense of race consciousness within the Australian Labour movement was communicated across the Tasman and established in the younger New Zealand Labour organisations.

The flow of Australian workers to New Zealand and their involvement as officials in the New Zealand unions was one way in which Australia contributed to the racial attitudes and policies of the New Zealand Labour movement. Australian workers coming to New Zealand often arrived thoroughly determined that the 'invasion' of Chinese would not reach in New Zealand, the proportions that it had in Australia.

The Australian impact can be seen in the great concern expressed in New Zealand over the threat to the furniture trade. Regular mention was made in public rallies and Parliament of the state of the trade in Melbourne where, it was alleged, 'unfair' Chinese competition had wreaked havoc among the European tradesmen. On 3 August 1894 a large meeting of furniture workers in Wellington met to consider the best means to combat 'evils arising from the influx of Chinese into the city'.¹³⁵ At the meeting the United Furnishing Trade Union was formed, being the first trade union in New Zealand to have originated because of the perceived threat of a racial minority. Alfred Bishop, the chairman at the meeting, and elected secretary of the Union, was a newly arrived immigrant from Australia, and had been a cabinetmaker and prominent unionist in Melbourne.¹³⁶ Bishop's

135. NZT 1 September 1894

136. The People 19 October 1895 p25.

hand in the formation of the Union was unmistakable and was a good example of the way in which Australian unionists created and sustained anti-Chinese feeling in New Zealand.

The case of the Seamen's Union and Shearers' Union cited above reflect the same situation. Their exclusionist membership policies, formulated in Australia, were the product of racial prejudice in that country, but were sustained by that same prejudice in New Zealand. In both cases the racism of the Australian Labour movement was institutionally established in New Zealand unions.

International Labour ideology in the late nineteenth century was potentially seen in the Knights of Labour. This organisation, which had originated in the United States, claimed to gather 'into one fold all branches of honourable toil, without regard to nationality, sex or colour.'¹³⁷ The aim of the Knights was the 'emancipation of the industrial slave' from the inequalities of the power system.

Outside of the Knights of Labour there is not much evidence that international working class consciousness was applied to the question of Chinese Immigration. In 1872 James McPherson, a leading associate of the Christchurch Working Mens Mutual Protection Society wrote a pamphlet entitled "Reasons Why the Working Men of New Zealand should become Internationalists." Although calling for New Zealand workers to 'fight under the banner of the International', McPherson's concept of Internationalism was weak. His article ended with an attack on Chinese immigration to the

137. LT 27 December 1892

South Island gold fields.¹³⁸ The Canterbury branch of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants once asserted that the 'affairs of nations should be conducted on the glorious principle of the brotherhood of man.'¹³⁹ However such sentiment never went beyond the level of rhetoric and was not cited as a basis for forming policies towards non-European immigrants.

In 1896 Ebenezer Early, a prominent member of the Knights of Labour in Christchurch, attacked the hypocrisy of the anti-Chinese movement. A proposed boycott of the Chinese was, he felt, a 'shame on our boasted brotherhood of the human race.'¹⁴⁰ If those in the anti-Chinese movement were honest in their objection then, according to Early, they should move against the European population that patronized the Chinese. Asserting that 'God hath made of one blood all nations' he wrote that the only argument against Chinese immigration was that they did not assimilate.¹⁴¹ The problem was not one of European versus Chinese workmen, but one of a 'more fiendish competitor' which lay with the great financiers and 'beneath whose rule British and other races are literally dying slow deaths.'¹⁴² However the Knights of Labour did not follow these views but joined with other Labour organisations in establishing a virtually

138. H.O.Roth, "How Marxism came to New Zealand", PS Vol 5 No 1 March 1953, p5.

139. LT 17 June 1892

140. LT 16 March 1896

141. LT 24 March 1896

142. LT 7 April 1896

unanimous show of solidarity against the immigration of Chinese and other Asians to New Zealand.

CHAPTER III: MODERATES AND MILITANTS

By the turn of the century the Liberal-Labour alliance had shown signs of total collapse. The weakening of the reform impetus of the Liberals which began in the late nineteenth century continued through into the twentieth, and this alienated Labour's confidence in the Liberals' capacity to represent the workers' interests. The Arbitration Court failed to live up to expectations and became a major bone of contention between radical trade unions and the Government. The disinclination of the Court to give decisions favourable to unions resulted in only a slight rise in minimum wages between 1902 and 1907. In the light of the relative prosperity of the country during these years, the net result for the workers was a lower living standard.¹ Leaders in the Labour movement began therefore, to look for more effective ways of protecting the workers.

One response to the changing political and economic situation came from what has been termed the 'moderate' element in the Labour movement. Through the agency of the Trades and Labour Councils there was an attempt to strengthen Labour's hand by creating an independent political Labour party. A first step in this direction was taken in 1904 when, at the Trades and Labour Councils' annual conference, the Political Labour League was formed. In 1910, after the League had failed to show itself a significant political force, it was reformed under the name of the New Zealand Labour Party.

1. Roth, Trade Unions in New Zealand, p24

The men who were the driving force behind these moves were, on the whole, the representatives of craft unionism in New Zealand. Many had been closely associated with the Liberals in the 1880's and 1890's and were committed to the principle that advancements for the workers would come through political action. This conservative element in the Labour movement traced its roots back to nineteenth century Labour and shared the approach to racial relations that dominated organised Labour at that time.

The issue of Chinese immigration arose regularly through the years under review in this chapter but, as with earlier campaigns, there were periods when antipathy towards the Chinese were more intense. In the South African Chinese labour dispute organised Labour in New Zealand declared itself in favour of a White Empire and during the 1907 and 1910-19 campaigns the White New Zealand policy was firmly established. At each successive period of agitation the long-standing intolerance towards Asians was reaffirmed and in the years immediately preceding the war anti-Asian feeling in the Labour movement reached its peak.

The decision by Transvaal gold magnates, in 1903, to introduce Chinese indentured labourers into their mines produced a strong wave of protest across the Empire especially in New Zealand. Seddon, the New Zealand premier, was one of the first heads of State to express concern after the plan had been approved by Balfour's Government.² He

2. R.M.Burdon, King Dick; a biography of Richard John Seddon, Christchurch. Whitcombe and Tombs, 1955. p303.

felt that aid given by New Zealand during the Boer War had been betrayed by the South African industrialists' plan to have 'hordes of Asiatics instead of Britishers introduced to the new territories.'³

Immediate support for Seddon was given by Labour bodies in the country, which were equally incensed at the situation. According to J.T.Paul the Otago Trades and Labour Council was the first to 'emphatically protest against the introduction of yellow labour into South Africa.'⁴ Its sister bodies soon joined the protest. The Canterbury Council wrote to Seddon conveying its thanks to him for his protest,⁵ while in Wellington a Trades and Labour Council - sponsored public meeting expressed its dismay at the events. Naughton, the President of the Wellington Council, echoed Seddon when he stated that they had fought in Africa 'for the suppression of an oligarchy whereas it now turned out [they] had been fighting for maintaining the power of a crowd of foreign millionaires, whose aims are inordinate wealth and the establishment of slavery under the British flag!'⁶ Shortly afterwards the West Coast Labour Conference joined the protest but regretted that action had not been taken earlier.⁷

3. R.Seddon to W.P.Reeves 3 February 1903 Letters from Men of Mark in New Zealand to W.P. Reeves, London (Photocopy in Alexander Turnbull Library) Vol 3.

4. TLC Report of Annual Conference, 1904 p8.

5. CTLC Correspondence 28 February 1904

6. LT 8 February 1904

7. LT 15 February 1904

The use of Chinese labour in South Africa was opposed by New Zealand Labour organisations on various grounds. There was some genuine humanitarian concern for the Chinese. The conditions under which the Chinese workers were to live were strongly condemned. The segregation of coolies into compounds and their enforced isolation from the South African people were described by Labour leaders as 'nothing less than slavery.' The more patriotic Labour spokesmen felt that such action was a direct affront to the high ideals upon which the British Empire was founded. Sir Robert Stout felt that the matter had grave implications for the Empire. In a letter to the secretary of the Wellington Trades and Labour Council he warned that this blatant exploitation of the Chinese people opened the way for China's 'peaceable, industrious and frugal peasants' to be made into 'soldiers and dispersed over the face of the earth, and if that is brought about, the well being of the white races will ... be menaced'.⁸ At a time when the question of national security was becoming important the presence of indentured Chinese labour on the Rand alarmed Liberal and Labour leaders alike.

In their treatment of the cheap labour aspect of the proposals, Labour spokesmen were quick to decry the devious schemes of the capitalists. However to the critics this was equally a racial issue. At the 1904 Trades and Labour Councils' Conference W.Young asserted that the mines could be worked by white labour and Kruger, an earlier South African premier, was praised for his determination to 'keep inferior races out of South Africa.'⁹

8. LT 8 February 1904

9. TLC Report of Annual Conference, 1904 p8

Despite the protests at national and international levels Chinese labour was not prevented from working on the Rand. In the face of the impossibility of reversing the move, public displeasure quickly died down. However, in 1906, the Canterbury Trades and Labour Council was drawn again into South African politics. The South African Independent Labour Party wrote to the Council seeking fighting funds for elections in the Transvaal.¹⁰ In the weeks after this plea several unions contributed to a fund set up by the Council. The willingness of the Council to help out reflected an awareness of its responsibility to fellow white workers internationally and the South African party's opposition to Chinese labour strengthened this feeling of solidarity.

The immigration side of the Chinese question, which had not received much attention since the campaigns of the mid-1890's, began to become important from 1905 onwards. Early in 1905 Cooper, the secretary of the Wellington Trades Council, wrote to the Canterbury Council for support to bring in legislation which would prohibit the landing of Asians in New Zealand.¹¹ The Canterbury Council's reply was to call on Labour members of Parliament to use their best endeavours to increase the poll tax to £250.

When the Trades and Labour Council met for its annual conference during May the Executive issued a report which detailed arrivals of Chinese and outlined action that had been taken by the Executive to deal with the situation. The

10. CTLC Executive Minutes 17 November 1906.

11. CTLC Correspondence 6 February 1905.

Executive had approached the Employers' Association, Shop-keepers' Protection Association and Shop Assistants' Association with the objective of forming a deputation to meet with the Premier.¹² Although only the Shop Assistants' Association responded to the call for combined action, the Executive was not disheartened and called for 'strenuous efforts' to check the 'influx'. No further action was taken.

At the 1906 Christchurch conference greater attention was paid to the matter. The discussion was initiated by the two Auckland delegates, Wallace and Rosser, who put forward a motion that called for a poll-tax of 'not less than £200' to be imposed on each immigrant.¹³ Wallace was concerned that many of the Chinese immigrants came to New Zealand and were 'tied hand and foot for years' to Chinese employers who advanced the poll tax money.

The Hawkes Bay delegate, A.Collins, felt that more stringent measures were needed and introduced an amendment which called for a poll-tax of £1000. Collins' opposition focused on his observations that the Chinese were 'defiling the daughters of Europeans.' He spoke with alarm at the not uncommon sight in Wellington of seeing a 'Chinaman walking in the street with a European girl and five or six half-caste Chinese children at his side.' W.H.Westbrook, who seconded this motion, also expressed doubts at the inadequacy of a £1000 poll tax. The amendment was carried.

The most radical solution to the problem came from the two Otago delegates. Breen, dissatisfied with both Wallace's

12. TLC Report of Annual Conference 1905 p6

13. TLC Report of Annual Conference 1906 p38

motion and Collins' amendment, moved that the conference declare in favour of a White New Zealand. This motion, seconded by J.T.Paul, was defeated by 12 to 4.

The failure of the conference to endorse the principle of a White New Zealand is, in some ways, baffling. Concurrent in Christchurch with the Trades Councils' conference was the annual conference of the Independent Political Labour League. At this conference there was a motion from Auckland delegates which called for a £1000 poll-tax to be incorporated into the League's platform.¹⁴ This motion, introduced on 18 April, two days before that passed at the Trades Councils' conference, was rejected by members of the League. Instead McLaren moved that 'this conference affirms the desirableness of increasing the poll-tax, but considers that the matter is already covered by the platform.' This platform as published by the New Zealand Worker in January 1906, included a plank which stated the League's commitment to a White New Zealand.¹⁵ There was also a denunciation of Asian immigration but no details of restrictive measures.

Policy differences do not account for the failure of the Trades Councils' conference to endorse the official policy of its political ally. The reason lies in the context in which the White New Zealand issue was raised at the conference. When the motion was opened for discussion A.Rosser argued that a White New Zealand would be an impossibility because many British subjects, particularly those from India and West

14. LT 19 April 1906

15. New Zealand Worker 3 January 1906

Indies, would be excluded. By introducing these complicating issues surrounding the White New Zealand policy Rosser put a check on the discussion. Collins noted that there had been no proposal to deal with any group other than the Chinese.¹⁶ The Wanganui delegate, Love, protested at the way the discussion was going and claimed that time was being wasted. He was supported by the chairman who 'detected an organised effort in some quarters to delay proceedings.'¹⁷ Thus it was pressure to continue through the agenda, and a feeling that a discussion on a White New Zealand was out of place which saw the speedy dismissal of the motion. The negative vote must be seen as a rejection of the procedural aspect of the motion and not of its actual content.

Much of the Labour movement's involvement in issues concerning Asians so far in the century had been confined to the Trades Councils and particularly to their Annual Conferences. Chinese immigration had been discussed sporadically and without the continuity of the campaigns of the 1890's. In 1907, however, the tempo quickened as individual unions began to lead one of the most virulent anti-Asian campaigns in New Zealand's history.

In late February 1907 the Wellington Cooks and Waiters' Union was thrust into the centre of a significant struggle for a White New Zealand. The Union had objected to the employment of Chinese cooks in two of the city's hotels. The Union's concerns were twofold; firstly, that the Chinese

16. LT 21 April 1906

17. Ibid

were not members of a union; and secondly, that some of its own members in the city were unemployed.¹⁸ This apparently straightforward opposition to the employment of Chinese was soon complicated when the Chinese expressed their desire to become members of the Union. Under the laws of the Union the sole condition for membership was that of good character and on this ground the Union could raise no objection to the Chinese cooks.

Confronted with this difficulty the union leadership was unsure on how to act. The secretary and other members of the Union preferred to see the Union disbanded rather than be forced to admit 'Chows and other Asiatics into their ranks.'¹⁹ The local Trades Council formed a deputation to Millar, the Minister of Labour, and were informed that there was no way that the Union could refuse admission to the Chinese.²⁰

The difficulty was eventually resolved when the hotel keepers assured the union that the situation would not arise again.²¹ But although the immediate crisis had been avoided fears that other unions might be faced with the same problem began to be aired. The Labour columnist in the New Zealand Times was concerned that Drivers', Compositors' and Carpenters' unions might have to deal with employers not desirous of 'maintaining a White New Zealand.'²²

18. NZT 25 February 1907

19. Truth 2 March 1907

20. NZH 16 March 1907

21. NZT 3 April 1907

22. Ibid

It was to the unions advantage to accept Chinese workers into their ranks. This would effectively have countered the objection that the Chinese worked for cheap wages. If the Chinese were unionists then they would have to be paid union rates, on par with white workers, thus removing any threat to the living standards of the New Zealanders. The cheap labour argument against the Chinese was, however, inappropriate in the case of the Chinese cooks who were paid award rates. That these New Zealand unions did not accept this solution shows that their objections were racially based and not economically motivated. The Cooks and Waiters' Union and its fellow Labour supporters with their impassioned pleas that a White New Zealand policy be protected showed that this was indeed the case.

The trends for Chinese immigration in this period also undercuts the unionists' fears. Up to and including 1902 there had been a total net loss of Chinese from the colony with Chinese immigrants never exceeding 79 per annum. By 1904 this trend had reversed and in 1906, a 'peak' year for Chinese immigration, 260 new arrivals exceeded departures by 127.²³ These figures are significant only when considering Chinese immigration by itself and lose all importance when seen in the light of total immigration to the country. For the same year adult immigrants numbered over 39,000, so that Chinese immigration constituted about 0.74% of the total immigration figures. Statistically there were no grounds on which to consider these Chinese immigrants a threat to unionism.

23. New Zealand Statistics 1920, p24.

The campaign against the Chinese continued in March when the Christchurch Trades and Labour Council discovered that the local police department had purchased vegetables from a Chinese grower. The Council issued a strong protest and, in a letter to the Acting Premier, claimed that this state of affairs was 'inconsistent with the expressed views of the Premier regarding a White New Zealand policy.'²⁴ Some weeks later the Council unearthed the cause of this situation when it was discovered that the cook at the police station was Chinese.²⁵

These incidents served as an important prelude to the Trades Councils' annual conference held in Dunedin during March and April. With feeling in some areas of the Labour movement running high against the Chinese a strong statement on non-European immigration was expected.

The Conference's discussion on Asian immigration was opened by one of the two Auckland delegates, Brookes, who moved that the resolution passed the previous year which called for a £1000 poll-tax be endorsed.²⁶ However delegates were now more aware of the issue and sought discussion on a more fundamental matter. W. Hampton, from Wellington, moved an amendment which called for a prohibition on Chinese and other Asian immigration and declared for a White New Zealand. For Hampton the problem before the delegates was simple. He stated strongly that the 'Labour Party wanted a clean colony and a clean race, and only by keeping these people out absolute-

24. CTLC Executive Minutes 14 March 1907

25. Truth 4 May 1907

26. TLC Report of Annual Conference 1907 p25.

ly' could this be achieved.²⁷ The two Westland delegates Jackson and Betts, added their approval and drew attention to the 'tainting' influence of the Chinese on the goldfields and in the towns.

As the discussion progressed it was evident that the delegates were seeking a blanket restriction on Asian immigration. It was no longer a matter of finding an acceptable standard to curb Asian immigration, the Labour leaders in the country wanted an absolute exclusion of Asians and to this there were to be no exceptions. J.A.McCullough claimed that there was as much 'danger from other Asiatic races, such as their Indian fellow-subjects, as there was from the "chow".²⁸

The only moderating arguments came from Peake and Brookes, the two Auckland delegates. Peake attempted to get some qualifications made in the exclusion policy so that 'exceptional' cases would be allowed for. Brookes pointed out to the Conference that, as New Zealand was a small country, the policy might provoke racial feeling internationally, the end result of which would be to make New Zealand 'yellow' instead of 'white'. Their arguments were ineffective and the delegates carried Hampton's amendment by a vote of 16 to 2. The dissentients were Peake and Brookes.

The Conference's treatment of the problem of Asian immigration revealed some key aspects of the racial attitudes prevailing in the traditional wing of the Labour movement.

27. TLC Report of Annual Conference p26

28. Ibid

The differing views taken by the Auckland delegates reflected the long-standing geographical division of feeling that existed on the issue. Auckland's willingness to do no more than acquiesce in the anti-Chinese campaigns of the 1890's was carried over in both the 1906 and 1907 Conferences where Auckland delegates expressed solutions substantially more moderate than the prevailing attitude of the conference. The Conference also indicated that the Labour movement had moved decisively from a position of arguing for the limitation of Chinese immigration to one of demanding total exclusion. The policy of a White New Zealand, with its undeniable racist overtones, had, throughout 1907, become established as the cornerstone of Labour's opposition to non-European immigration. The rhetoric of the unionists in the country now expressed a more forthright and explicit racism.

Labour's clamour for a White New Zealand continued at the Waterside Workers' Conference, held in Wellington. At the Conference a resolution identical to that of the Trades and Labour Councils' Conference was passed and a boycott of Chinese businesses urged.²⁹ Discussion on the matter drew attention to the 'Chinaman's virtues' which were disrupting the furniture industry in Australasia. One delegate claimed that furniture made by Chinese in Melbourne could be bought in Christchurch at prices 50% below those of New Zealand manufactured products. This allegation was based on evidence given earlier in the month by a Christchurch builder before the Arbitration Court,. The builder had claimed that mantle-

29. Evening Post 25 July 1907

pieces made by Chinese in Australia were sold in New Zealand and were in competition with the work of local craftsmen.³⁰

At the Waterside Workers' Conference a very practical proposal to 'exclude the yellow races' was presented. One delegate suggested that, as the object was to secure a White Australasia, the government should be urged to 'encourage the propagation of the white population of the dominion.'³¹ This suggestion was too extreme for other delegates who felt that the threat to Labour from the employer was equally as great as that from the Chinese. Large families, they argued, did not serve the interests of the working men and would only perpetrate 'White slavery.'

For the rural workers of the country 1907 saw the continuation of their struggle to legislate against Chinese workers. From as early as 1893 the shearers had, as part of a wider campaign to improve farm accommodation, insisted that legislation be enacted that allowed for separate sleeping quarters for Chinese. Their efforts were eventually successful and, in the 1898 Shearers' Accommodation Act, clause 8 stated that 'it shall be incumbent upon the employer to provide for such person or persons [Chinese] separate and distinct sleeping accommodation from that provided for other shearers.'³² Failure to do so resulted in penalties for the employer.

30. NZH 18 July 1907

31. Evening Post 25 July 1907

32. New Zealand Statutes 1898 p61.

In 1907 a Labour Bills Committee was hearing submissions for the proposed Agricultural Labourers Accommodation Bill, when the question of non-European workers arose. Edward Kennedy, representing the Canterbury Agricultural and Pastoral Labourer's Union, expressed dissatisfaction with the Chinese accommodation clause in the 1898 Act because it applied only to the Chinese. It was Kennedy's suggestion that the act be altered to cover 'all coloured races. That is, all Eastern peoples, and negroes too.'³³ This objection against the limitations of the old Act was successful and in the new Act the word 'Chinese' was altered to read 'Asiatic'.³⁴ This clause remained law until the 1936 Agricultural Workers Act, but there is no evidence that the clause was enforced during the time that it was law.

The campaign by organised Labour against Asians in 1907 was boosted by an alliance with the newly formed Anti-Asiatic League. The League, which was the creation of non-labour forces, did not remain independent from the Labour movement for long. The League's two leaders, J.Cameron and W.A.Lloyd, made early approaches to Labour Councils which pledged their full support.³⁵ This support became evident in public meetings held by the League where prominent Labour personalities took active roles. The relationship between the two was reciprocal as the League provided moral encouragement and a valuable platform for the Trades Councils' campaign. The

33. AJHR 1907 Vol V I-9 p15.

34. New Zealand Statutes 1907 p131.

35. NZT 19 April 1907; CTLC Executive Minutes 3 June 1907

aims and objects of the League were completely compatible with those of the Councils. These were:

To combat evils arising out of the presence of Asiatics in our midst, and to approach the Government from time to time in reference to Asiatic immigration, and advocate as follows:

- (a) The necessity of a substantial increase in the present poll tax.
- (b) The deportation of all undesirable Asiatics, recognising the principles of compensation if necessary.
- (c) The recognition of our constitutional rights affecting this question to the fullest extent.
- (d) To prevent Chinese from competing unfairly with European business people in regard to working overtime in their laundries and other businesses.
- (e) To prevent Chinese from employing Europeans or Maoris of either sex, or vice versa.
- (f) To prevent the intermarriage of Chinese and Europeans.
- (g) To prevent any further naturalisation of Chinese.
- (h) The clearing out of Chinese slums in cities and towns.³⁶

The alliance with the Anti-Asiatic League was a boost to the confidence of Labour's campaign. By July Labour's adherence to the White New Zealand policy was complete and moves were afoot to ensure that it would be vigorously enforced. At a public meeting held in Dunedin on 24 July, W.S. Pattison, the President of the local Trades Council, and R.K. Douglas, the vice-President of the Independent Political Labour League, introduced a motion which sought to achieve

36. F. Tod, The making of a madman, Lionel Terry: a biography, Dunedin. Otago Foundation Books 1977 pp50-51.

this. Their carefully worded statement read:

That, in the interests of racial purity, and to preserve the European type in New Zealand, and for other reasons difficult to state, but well understood, this meeting of Dunedin citizens is of the opinion that inter-marriage between Europeans and Chinese, or other Asiatics, should be absolutely prohibited by law.^{36a}

This resolution which expressed arguments against Asians of an explicitly biological racism climaxed the 1907 popular disturbances. It came at a time when many vicious comments on Chinese were being made, especially through the columns of Truth. A few days before the Dunedin meeting the paper informed its readers that 'the Chow element in New Zealand is like a cancer eating into the vitals of our moral being and slowly and insidiously encompassing the doom of its victim.'³⁷

In Parliament there was also widespread support for measures to counter the perceived Asian threat. Although the politicians had the same objective as the extra-parliamentary agitators, they did not use such emotive language or suggest such drastic measures. When the Chinese Immigrants Bill was brought before Parliament it received no criticism and passed both Houses comfortably. The Bill, which Sir Joseph Ward justified on the grounds of racial purity, imposed a reading test on prospective Chinese immigrants.³⁸

36^a. Otago Daily Times, 25 July 1907

37. Truth 20 July 1907

38. G.H.Scholefield and T.DH.Hall "Asiatic Immigration into New Zealand: Its history and legislation." in N.MacKenzie (ed), The Legal Status of Aliens in Pacific Countries, London.Oxford University Press 1937 pp262-277.

Undeterred by the hostility to their presence, Chinese who had decided to make New Zealand their home continued to establish themselves in businesses. The first decade of the century saw some major changes in the occupational structure of the Chinese population as many became market gardeners, fruiterers, greengrocers, storekeepers, hawkers and laundrymen. In 1911 there were over 940 Chinese involved in market gardening, while only ten years earlier this number stood at about 660.³⁹ The biggest inroads made by the Chinese into the country's economic activity occurred in food retailing and laundrying. From 1901 to 1911 the number of Chinese fruiterers (including assistants) increased substantially from 88 to 281.⁴⁰ For the same period the number of Chinese laundrymen increased from 86 to 287. The growth in the food retailing area was the one that had an important influence in the development of relations between Europeans and Chinese. The arrival of a Chinese fruiterer in a city was a conspicuous event and often evoked widespread cries of outrage.

In early 1912 Chinese shopkeepers arrived in Christchurch and established businesses that rapidly became very popular. The success of the Chinese aroused the resentment of local European hawkers, shopkeepers and trade unionists who were wary of Chinese initiatives.

The first expression of discontent was spontaneous and consisted of crowds gathering outside Chinese shops on

39. New Zealand Census 1901 p595-6; 1911 p507

40. Ibid.

successive Saturday and Monday evenings in late February and early March.⁴¹ The crowds, estimated at 'several hundred' became abusive towards the Chinese shopkeepers but violence was averted by the presence of the police. A public meeting called by the Sydenham Burgesses' Association was held on 12 March and unanimously carried a motion calling for a boycott of the Chinese traders.⁴²

Labour organisations in the city reacted promptly to the disturbance. The Metal Workers' Assistants Union wrote to unions in the city and urged fellow unionists to patronize only the European fruiterers. The Canterbury Freezing Workers and Canterbury Drivers' Union endorsed this move, as did the Trades Council executive who were alarmed at the 'grave economic danger to the community.'⁴³

A prominent Christchurch and New Zealand Labour leader, Hiriam Hunter, made an early appeal to the workers of the city to consider the 'serious menace which the Chinese race are to the Labour movement.'⁴⁴ Hunter's arguments against the Chinese were typically a mixture of racial and economic factors. Workers who patronized the Chinese were accused of 'deliberately committing race suicide' and were called on by Hunter to do their 'utmost to maintain ... a White New Zealand.' The Labour party worldwide was involved in a fight to 'uplift humanity and raise their standard of living.' This, according to Hunter, could only be achieved by improv-

41. LT 26 Feb, 27 Feb; 11 March; 12 March; 18 March 1912

42. LT 13 March 1912

43. Canterbury Freezing Works and Related Trades Union Minutes 9 March 1912; CTLC Executive Minutes 2 March 1912; Press 23 March 1912

44. LT 5 March 1912

ing the position of the lowest-paid workers in the community and lifting them to a higher plane. Support given to Chinese traders worked against this and placed the 'emancipation of the working masses further from our reach.'

Hunter's attitude reflected a common feature of anti-Chinese agitators which was to neglect arguments against the Chinese when those arguments were not helpful in creating an awareness of threat. Hunter neglected the usual allegation that the Chinese were in fact the lowest-paid workers in the community and nowhere advocated that the Chinese 'working masses' should also be emancipated. It was often pointed out that the success of the Chinese was due to the low prices of their wares. While figures for this are not available it is reasonable to attribute Chinese success to produce that was both cheaper and of better quality than the produce of the established European businesses. On the basis of Hunter's reasoning the group to benefit most from this would be the workers who, indirectly, would see an improvement in their cost of living.

However the agitation in Christchurch did not have a rational approach to Chinese activity and, as the opposition progressed, this became more evident. Following another crowd disturbance the small shopkeepers and unionists united their efforts and an Anti-Chinese League was formed on 27 March.⁴⁵ Hunter, who presided over the meeting which formed the League, said that the League's purpose was to counteract

45. LT 29 March 1912

'the invasion of Chinese shopkeepers which is expected to follow on the opening of the first Chinese fruit shop in Christchurch.' The recent events in the city were regarded as the beginnings of a greater flood and the general desire was for an immediate halt as there was 'no hope of a cure, once the evil started.' One of the union representatives, W. Ballinger, suggested that the problem could be solved if the Trades Council created a municipal market where poor people could buy cheap commodities. This he hoped, would guarantee the success of the proposed boycott.

The threat from Chinese shopkeepers was quickly eclipsed when a 'much more serious invasion' was discovered. Rumours that Chinese manufacturers had bought premises for a furniture factory in the city ignited strong opposition from the European community not only in Christchurch, but throughout the whole country.

At the monthly meeting of the Christchurch United Furniture Trade Industrial Union on 3 April a letter was received from the Canterbury Employers' Association which dealt with the proposed Chinese furniture factory. The Union appointed three of its members, Simmons, Barlow and Ballinger, to meet with the Employers' Association for discussions on what action to take.⁴⁶ When this committee reported back to the Union at the following month's meeting the issue had escalated to one of national concern, with correspondence on the issue being received from Dunedin, Wellington and Auckland.⁴⁷

46. Canterbury Furniture and Related Trades Industrial Union of Workers. Ordinary Minutes, 2 April 1912.

47. Ibid. 1 May 1912.

In Wellington a trade union leader stated that the unions and employers had combined to counter the threat.⁴⁸ A deputation waited on Laurenson, the Minister of Labour and was warmly received.⁴⁹ The Minister's encouragement was appreciated by the secretary of the Workers' Federation, D. Moriarity, who was working hard to put a halt to the activities of Chinese enterprises. Moriarity was seeking legislation similar to that in Western Australia to be passed by Parliament. These laws, applicable to Chinese and other Asians only, included restrictions on hours worked and the stamping of goods with the words 'Chinese' or 'Asiatic Labour'.⁵⁰

A statement by the Inspector of Factories that no Chinese Furniture Factory had been established in Christchurch,⁵¹ and an emphatic denial of the rumour by a Chinese resident,⁵² had no immediate effect on the agitation. A Trades Council meeting in Christchurch carried by a large majority a resolution calling for Chinese to be excluded from the country.⁵³ In Auckland the Federated Furniture Trade Industrial Association of Workers was well advanced in its plans to combat the threat. The union had been active among local employers, many of whom had signed a declaration of

48. Press 6 May 1912

49. LT 10 May 1912

50. Otago Daily Times 25 May 1912

51. LT 9 May 1912

52. LT 16 May 1912

53. LT 10 May 1912

support for the southern protest.⁵⁴ A special committee had been set up by the union to ensure continuity of action between union meetings.

Australian influences were an important contributing factor in the campaign. In Christchurch both Daniel Sullivan, a prominent national union leader, and D. Palmer, President of the Anti-Chinese League illustrated from their experiences in Australia the hopelessness that the European worker faced when competing against the Chinese.⁵⁵ The special committee formed by furniture workers in Auckland included many men who had had dealings with the Chinese in Australia. The Auckland union, desirous of building a strong case against the Chinese, had written to the United Furniture Trade Union of Sydney and subsequently received a large amount of information on the employment of Chinese in the furniture trade.⁵⁶ However when this material arrived it was of no great value to the local unions. The failure of the factory to materialise led to a decline in the campaign and the Waihi Strike, which was now well in progress, had become the focal point of the Labour movement.

The Cooks and Waiters' Union, Rural Workers and Furniture workers all played important roles in the anti-Chinese campaigns of the early twentieth century. A common feature of their battles to keep New Zealand White was that all three were faced with involvement of Chinese in their sphere of

54. LT 13 May 1912

55. Press 7 May 1912; LT 8 May 1912

56. Otago Daily Times 29 June 1912

activities. In contrast, other unions which were vocal in the periods of agitation were not affected at all by Chinese competition. However, although unions in the moderate wing of the trade union movement were deeply involved in fighting Asian immigration and Asian progress in the country's economic structure, none were as persistent in their efforts to resist Asians as the Seamen's Union. From 1900 through to 1910 the seamen continued their nineteenth century battle against the employment of coloured labour on vessels trading in New Zealand waters. The threat posed by coloured labour to New Zealand seamen intensified during these years and the seamen met this threat by a sustained, determined campaign to protect their hard fought conditions and to keep the country's mercantile fleet white.

The first significant event in the Seamen's Union's campaign against coloured labour occurred late in 1900 when it was suggested that the New Zealand Government subsidise a line of steamers to trade between New Zealand and South Africa. The Seamen's Union was concerned that this would undermine the strength of the union and subsequently laid down conditions that were to apply to the venture. These conditions were:

1. Steamers subsidised shall be British vessels and preferably a New Zealand one
2. That the crew employed shall be white and British subjects
3. The crew to be engaged and discharged in New Zealand
4. Wages to be those ruling on the New Zealand coast

5. General conditions of employment to be those on the New Zealand coast. Preference to be given to members of the Australasian Seamen's Union.⁵⁷

These provisions reflected the Union's major concerns and were to be the fundamental principles that guided policy over coloured labour for the rest of the decade.

In 1904 the Auckland branch of the Seamen's Union wrote to Kneen, the Wellington branch's secretary, and informed him of the employment of Chinese in the stokehold of the cable steamer 'Iris'. The Union was deeply concerned at this and sought the immediate reinstatement of 'white labour'.⁵⁸ The Wellington Union responded promptly and a delegation from the Union and Trades Council to the Post-Master General received an assurance that the vessel would be manned by white labour. Belcher, the Dunedin and New Zealand secretary of the Union, called the employment of the 'Chows' a 'crime', particularly as New Zealand had 'emphatically denounced the South African scandal'.⁵⁹

The incident over the 'Iris' was the first of a series which occurred over the next few years. In 1906 the employment of Maoris on the Government steamer 'Hinemoa' drew a protest from the Union which felt again that preference should have been given to white men.⁶⁰ Following discussions with the Union, Millar, the Minister of Marine, promised that the practice would be discontinued. In 1908 concerns over the

57. WSU General Meeting. 18 December 1900

58. WSU General Meeting. 14 June 1904

59. Belcher to Kneen 18 June 1904 WSU Correspondence

60. WSU General Meeting 14 August 1906; FSU Executive Council Meeting. Report. October 1906 p9.

use of the 'leprous chow' on British ships were expressed by Truth. After stating that 'thirty-nine of the kite-faced horrors' were crew members on the 'Crown of Galicia,' the paper assured readers that a 'walk down the wharf while the wharf-labourers are congregated [was] the most edifying experience from a purity-of-race point of view'.⁶¹ Later in the same year the seamen gained another victory when a white crew replaced coolie labour on the 'Machora'.⁶²

An important phase of the Union's efforts to counter the use of non-white crews occurred in 1902 with the Colonial Merchant Shipping Conference. The London Conference, which consisted of leading representatives of colonial governments, Shipowners, and unions, met to discuss various aspects of shipping between Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand. The list of delegates was impressive and included men such as Lloyd George, Havelock Wilson and W.M. Hughes. New Zealand was represented by Sir Joseph Ward and William Belcher.

Belcher's role at the Conference is noted for his efforts to get recognition of the dangers posed by the employment of coloured seamen. His stated aim of keeping the 'Asiatic blot off Australasia' led to the introduction of a motion that declared opposition to 'the employment of Lascars, coolies, Chinamen, or persons of any alien race on any vessel owned or chartered to trade in the Commonwealth or New Zealand'.⁶³ Belcher was supported by Sir W.J. Lyne

61. Truth 11 January 1908

62. Belcher to Kneen 25 May 1908

63. NZH 19 April 1907

and Sir J. Ward, who reaffirmed the New Zealand government's policy of employing white crews. This move by Belcher caused a small disturbance at the Conference. The Indian delegate immediately objected, stating that Lascars were 'loyal, sober and industrious British subjects'. An attempt to moderate the motion by substituting 'coloured labour' for 'Lascars, coolies and Chinamen' did not lessen opposition and the motion was eventually withdrawn.

In 1910 the problem became acute after it had become evident that several shipping companies, particularly the P and O Company, were operating their vessels in New Zealand waters without adhering to the regulations which applied to local vessels and crews. Wages were one of the main areas to be singled out by the Seamen's Union. W. Young the secretary of the Wellington Seamen's Union, claimed that firemen and sailors on the Union Company's 'Marama' received £9 and £7 a month respectively, while Lascar seamen received wages which ranged from 16/- to £1 a month, 'with a bag of rice to feed them on.'⁶⁴ The intrusion of these foreign owned and cheaply-manned ships had, the Seamen's Union executive felt, reached the proportion of an 'invasion'. At a meeting of the Executive a lengthy resolution was framed which called on the Government to amend the Shipping and Seamen Act so that all vessels, regardless of country of origin should be 'compelled to observe the industrial conditions and rates of wages as are observed and paid by ships owned in the Dominion.'⁶⁵ A delegation of seamen which

64. NZT 26 September 1910

65. NZT 22 September 1910

met with politicians stressed the gravity of the situation and urged immediate protection for the intercolonial trade.⁶⁶

The Government representatives, who included Ward and Millar, were sympathetic with the Union and promised legislation. On 31 October the Shipping and Seamen Amendment Bill was introduced to Parliament.⁶⁷ The Bill which passed trouble-free through both Houses met the problem in two ways. Firstly, it became binding for all seamen working on vessels trading from New Zealand to Australia, or the Cook Islands, to be paid rates of wages ruling in New Zealand. This measure did not apply to vessels that by-passed Australia from New Zealand. The employment on coloured crews was dealt with by a clause which imposed an increased stamp duty on bills of lading in ships 'manned wholly or in part by Asiatics'.⁶⁸ This was the first direct reference to Asians in New Zealand maritime law. Earlier acts had only indirectly dealt with the issue by requiring a 'sufficient knowledge of English' as a condition for employment.

The dominant personality in the Seamen's Unions efforts to combat the alleged dangers of coloured labour was Belcher. Belcher's dedication to the battle rested heavily on his personal views, which mirrored the prevailing racial attitudes among moderate Labour officials. For Belcher the exclusion

66. NZT 26 September 1910

67. NZPD Vol 153 p174

68. New Zealand Statutes 1910 p507.

of coloured crews from New Zealand waters was the natural corollary of the principle of a White New Zealand. During discussions with politicians he reminded them of their responsibility to keep 'people on the shore white' and 'clear of alien intermixture.' Similarly he argued that the country's mercantile supremacy should not be sacrificed for the sake of the 'objectionable' alien seamen.⁶⁹

Belcher's stress on the racial aspect of the debate was not simply intended to apply political pressure on the Government. It was an accurate reflection of his own prejudice. A letter of his to the Otago Daily Times was heavily censored for its many references to 'nigger' seamen and the 'nigger-loving' P and O Company.⁷⁰ In 1911 he published a pamphlet which defended his view that only white and British seamen should man British ships. Quoting a British ship-owner the circular stressed the vices of the Chinese, their 'special attraction for British women' and the dangers of the 'infusion of Mongolian blood in our population.'⁷¹

The extensive attention given to the various aspects of Asian immigration and competition made it necessary for exclusionist policies to be justified. One such defence came in 1909 when a barrister, J.W.Poynton, wrote a series of articles for the Wellington Trades and Labour Council's journal the Weekly Herald on the subject "The Exclusion of aliens." The articles which attempted to provide a well-

69. NZT 22 September 1910

70. Australasian Federated Seamen's Union, The Lascar Question, 1910

71. Otago Daily Times 29 July 1911

reasoned defence of the policies in the trade union movement were a clear reflection of the prejudices that impelled the unions to shun Asians. Although Poynton began his series by claiming that the problem was a central, economic one, his argument was full of racial assumptions and emotive warnings that echoed the fears of contemporary racists.

His economic argument was identical to the ones used in New Zealand against the Chinese since the days of the gold rush. Chinese industry, 'celibate condition, frugal fare and willingness to live in any comfortless surroundings' enabled them to undersell the European.⁷² If unrestricted immigration came to New Zealand Poynton predicted that 'every trade and occupation would be carried on by them' and the 'white worker would become extinct.'

These alleged economic dangers of the Chinese only made sense, however, when put in a racial context and Poynton developed the notion that the threat to the European was essentially a racial one. In a statement that Reeves would have fully endorsed Poynton claimed that it was the right of

highly civilized Christian peoples to protect themselves from industrial invasion by vast numbers of competitors who would soon overthrow all their institutions and imperil their existence as a race It is beyond any doubt that the European cannot compete with the Asiatic, and he is faced with the simple alternative; exclude him or die out. 73

The intrusion of 'yellow, brown and black races' into New

72. Weekly Herald 24 April 1909

73. Ibid

Zealand with their 'unpassable barrier to union and progress' would destroy the promise of greatness that had been given to New Zealanders.

It was clear through Poynton's articles and the general attitudes of the unions and Labour Councils that the difficulties of Asian immigration arose out of a conviction that New Zealand was engaged in a struggle of the races. One of the objectives of the 'teeming millions' of Asia was to secure the thinly populated lands of New Zealand and in the course of doing so, the white race would be destroyed. The perceived economic competition of the Chinese was regarded as the most important area in which the struggle was being fought. If the white worker and his unions wilted before the Chinese competitor then the social, economic, political and racial future of a white New Zealand would be forever lost.

For most of the nineteenth century this struggle against the races of Asia had been regarded primarily in terms of Chinese immigration. Contemporaries had felt that the danger would be neutralised by the passing of legislation that imposed restrictions on the size of Chinese immigration. Through all the years of agitation the opinion had prevailed that the solution to the problem lay in legislation and that once laws had been passed New Zealand's future as a white man's country would be secure. However in the years that led up to the First World War this view was no longer held with the same confidence. A changed international situation and a re-evaluation of New Zealand's relation to Asia led many to believe that the threat from Asia was even more serious and that firmer measures were required to safeguard a White

New Zealand.

The threat to New Zealand was seen in terms of the growing military might of Asia and particularly of Japan. Politicians and Labour organisations had felt this threat as early as 1894 but it was not until after 1904 that it became a major issue of concern. The victory of the Japanese over Russia in 1905 brought about a major change in the way New Zealanders saw their station in the Pacific. With the rise of Japan to the status of a major military power the 'Yellow Peril' became a greater menace. As early as 1904 the New Zealand Herald had expressed fears that the Japanese military machine, which aimed at 'Painting the World Brown', would soon turn its attention to the sparsely-settled white colonies in the Pacific.⁷⁴ The man chiefly responsible for the Herald's expression of concern was the ex-Australian, 'bourgeois socialist', William Lane.⁷⁵ Lane, whose tirades against the Chinese in Australia revealed some of the worst racism in that country, came to New Zealand after spending time in Paraguay where he had attempted to establish a utopian socialist settlement. Although no longer the Labour enthusiast of the past Lane did not lose his antipathy to the Asians. As a leading journalist and editor of the Herald he was one of the country's foremost advocates for national defence against the Asian threat.⁷⁶

74. Lissington, New Zealand and Japan, p5

75. The term 'bourgeois socialist' has been applied to Lane because, although concerned for the workers' interests, he remained an ally of the ruling class and employers.. His 'socialist' goal was class collaboration not revolution.

76. McQueen, A new Britannia, p191-3

Britain's efforts in securing the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1905 did not allay the fears of colonials. Over the next few years the question of Japan's schemes in the Pacific became progressively more important to New Zealanders. The formation of the National Defence League in 1906, the visit of the 'Great White Fleet' in 1908, and the 1909 and 1910 Defence Acts were all important steps in the attempt to find a satisfactory solution to the problem of the nation's defences.

By 1911 and 1912 the problem had become acute. The annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910 and reports of Japanese migration to some Pacific Islands stimulated advocates of defence to renewed action. The New Zealand Herald was particularly alarmist in its interpretation of Japanese moves in the Pacific. Slowly but steadily Japan was seen as climbing 'the ladder of Pacific supremacy' and encircling New Zealand and Australia.⁷⁷ Pressure placed on the Imperial Government led to a renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance with a consequent subsiding of some of the anxiety felt in New Zealand.

After his 1911 election victory Massey, along with his Minister of Defence, James Allen, set about finding a much more satisfactory solution. This was achieved in December 1913 with the passing of the Naval Defence Act which authorised the establishment of a New Zealand naval force.⁷⁸ This

77. NZH 11 March 1911

78. NZPD Vol 167 p600

action was taken directly to counter the growth of the Japanese navy and to ensure the protection of New Zealand.

The response of the Labour movement to talk of the 'Yellow Peril' and to the need for naval defence reflected the stance taken on Asian immigration. Outside of Parliament the moderate wing of the Labour movement was one of the strongest advocates for defence and went to great lengths to warn of the impending danger.

Prior to 1911 the moderates had not addressed themselves greatly to the problem of defence. No organised campaign had been initiated and only isolated comments had been made. Belcher had been quick to see the implications for defence of the Seamen's Union's success in banning 'Chow firemen' from the S.S. 'Iris' in 1904. In a letter to Kneen he had commented that the action would probably offend the Chinese and 'we shall have to put our defences in order to resist some pig-tail manned warship.'⁷⁹ He recklessly declared that 'provided white men are employed we'll take the risk of hostilities.' By 1906 this attitude had grown and Labour commentators had begun to see the inevitability of a clash with the 'yellow agony of Eastern Asia'. The New Zealand Worker in January 1906 had warned its readers that, unless a strong Australasian naval fleet was established, they would be 'swallowed up by the pig-tail and women-to-lend heathens of China and Japan.'⁸⁰

By 1911 these isolated expressions of concern had given way to a strong Labour campaign for military strength to

79. Belcher to Kneen 8 July 1904

80. New Zealand Worker 3 January 1906

counter the Asian threat. Leading the call to set the country's defences in order was the Wellington weekly Voice of Labour. In an article of 19 May 1911 the editor, W.P.Black, wrote at length on the rise of Japan and China as world powers. The Dragon, Japan, was awake, armed and

knocking at the doors of Western civilization, asking that its hordes shall be allowed to enter and mix with the white race, shall be allowed to enter and compete with the white men on the face of the earth, shall be allowed to enter and take the women of the white race in all their glory of womanhood supreme, and trample them, body and soul, into the indescribable degradation of Oriental immorality.⁸¹

Black reminded readers that although protests by organised Labour had checked the influx of the 'hordes of Asia... the hour is drawing even nearer when something more will be needed than paper restriction laws.'

The arrival of the American Labour evangelist, W.T.Mills, in June 1911 was a great boost to moderate Labour's campaign. Mills, brought to New Zealand by the Trades and Labour Councils to conduct a lecture tour, was an immediate success in the country. A social reformer and advocate of an unified, independent Labour party, Mills was also outspoken on the need for defence. His time spent in Australia had sharpened his views on the matter. He was full of praise for the 'force of rifles and guns, in the hands of men trained to use them' for the protection of the daughters of white workers from the 'hive of Mongolian humanity.'⁸²

81. Voice of Labour 19 May 1911

82. Otago Daily Times 23 September 1911

Through the columns of the Voice of Labour the cry against the Japanese and Chinese continued, with the paper's editors lending their support on the fronts where the 'Asian problem' was being fought. Towards the end of 1911 the paper called for Empire-wide legislation to 'prohibit entirely the employment of coloured labour on British ships.'⁸³ When the disturbance in the Christchurch furniture trade arose the paper demanded a more radical solution than that sought by local unionists. It sought for bold actions, and claimed that 'a declaration for a White New Zealand [was] no good without guns. We must be in a position not only to demand the entire exclusion of the yellow races, but to make good our demands with the only right that counts, the right of organised might.'⁸⁴

The years preceding the First World War saw important developments occur in the policies of the conservative wing of the Labour movement towards non-European immigration. One of the most significant of these was the move from calling for specific restrictions on Asian immigration to a demand for a more comprehensive exclusion. This reached its peak with the Labour Party's formal adherence to a White New Zealand policy and the vigour with which many unions defended it. The greater awareness of a White New Zealand, the cry for defence against the 'Yellow Peril' and the emotion-charged rhetoric on the dangers of miscegenation all indicated that the racist line in the Labour movement had become stronger.

83. Voice of Labour 25 August 1911

84. Ibid 10 May 1912

By 1914 a large proportion of the New Zealand Labour movement had unequivocally made known its racist attitudes and policies.

The Emergence of International Socialism

After his tour of New Zealand in 1904, André Siegfried commented that the New Zealand worker had 'scarcely any or no class hatred', was not a revolutionary, and was only vaguely socialist.⁸⁵ There had been socialist activity earlier in the country but by 1904, socialist influence was not strong in the Labour movement. Ramstead's co-operatives in 1900 brought a number of English socialists to the country and, although the settlement plans failed, many of these immigrants were to help form Socialist branches in the cities. During 1901 and 1902 such branches were set up in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch, and received support from trade unions.⁸⁶ The presence of Tom Mann in the country during 1902 aroused interest in socialism but his premature departure was a setback to the progress of left wing views in New Zealand.

W.Downie Stewart, in his introduction to the 1914 English edition of Siegfried's book, commented that 'class-consciousness and the espousal of revolutionary Socialism' had become a distinguishing characteristics of the Labour movement.⁸⁷ This new element was the result of major changes

85. A.Siegfried, Democracy in New Zealand, translated from the French by E.V.Burns. London. G.Bell, 1914 p89.

86. H.O.Roth 'The New Zealand Socialist Party' P S Vol 9(1) 1957, p52-3.

87. Siegfried pxvi

that had taken place in the years following 1904. The arrival of men such as Pat Hickey, E.J.Howard, Paddy Webb, Harry Holland and visits by E.R.Hartley, Kier Hardie, Harry Scott Bennett and R.S.Ross, gave a valuable impetus to the socialist movement and supplied it with a core of deeply committed leaders.

The militant spirit of some of these men surfaced in the 1908 Blackball miners' strike, and it was the success of this strike that led to the creation of the country's first militant working-class organisation. The formation of the New Zealand Federation of Miners, which in 1909 became the New Zealand Federation of Labour, heralded a new phase in the development of the New Zealand Labour movement. Its birth, coupled with the revival of the Socialist Party, which held its first national conference in April 1908, meant that a viable alternative to the Trades Councils' method of representing workers' interests had emerged. Rejecting the use of the Arbitration Court in settling industrial disputes the militants advocated direct job action and in this way sought to disrupt the relations between capital and Labour.

Depression conditions in 1909 further alienated workers from the Arbitration Court and made them 'receptive to the class war propoganda of the Federation of Labour.'⁸⁸ In March 1911 the New Zealand 'Red' Federation of Labour took over the Shearers' Union journal, Maoriland Worker, and by May 1912 had a circulation of 8,500. It became a most

88. Roth, Trade Unions in New Zealand, p30

effective propoganda tool for the diffusion of radical working class ideology.

The writers of revolutionary socialism did not confine their attention solely to economic and political matters. There was a serious attempt to work out their beliefs and apply them to the policies of a White New Zealand and White Australasia. Radical newspapers such as Commonweal , Maoriland Worker, Social Democrat and Industrial Unionist frequently discussed the attitudes of the New Zealand worker to Asians. Actions regarded as a betrayal of true socialist principles were quickly exposed and condemned. Some personalities for example, H. Scott Bennett, had fought racist views in Australia and were equally determined to expose and weaken this 'false' sense of working class consciousness in New Zealand. Others, such as Gilchrist, Hartley, R.Hogg and Roderick Ross, had migrated from the British Isles and had little first-hand experience of the racial issues in New Zealand and Australia. However all approached racial relations from an ideological framework that had rejected British imperialism and white racism.

The starting point of the radicals' racial views came from the basic tenets of socialist ideology which stressed international worker solidarity and class warfare. Racial antipathy was regarded as a distortion of working class attitudes. It was believed that it arose out of the employers' desire to keep the workers oppressed. As the Industrial Unionist put it: 'To prevent working class solidarity the [capitalist] Press endeavours to spread disruption by arous-

ing certain prejudices - racial, religious, political or patriotic.'⁸⁹ For the pages of the Maoriland Worker especially, this position was unambiguously expressed and readers were left in no doubt as to where their loyalties should be. In 1912 the paper stated:

There are no real divisions of mankind into races. What matter the trivial distinctions of colour, creed, or country; what matter the differences of skin or speech. Class distinctions alone are of real, vital importance. All other divisions are mere fakes that the ruling class use to delude the workers into silence and keep them in subjection.⁹⁰

As the roots of racial tension lay in the exploitative nature of capitalism, racial harmony would be secured only by the collapse of the existing system. The Social Democratic Party, which had been founded in 1913 by an alliance of the old United Labour Party and 'Red Feds', included in its election platform a plank that sought 'industrial justice' for countries in or bordering on the Pacific. The removal of 'political enslavement or industrial oppression' would put an end to 'the danger of war ... between the yellow and white races.'⁹¹ The Socialist ideal of 'brotherhood, real brotherhood', was only possible when the 'cannibalistic, competitive system [had] received its quietus.'⁹²

The literature of the socialists in the Labour movement painted a very different picture of the Chinese than that of

89. Industrial Unionist 1 February 1913

90. MW 23 February 1912

91. Social Democratic Party, Constitution and Platform, 1913 pp 59

92. Social Democrat 2 July 1911

the moderates. The prevailing racial attitudes were heavily influenced by a stereotyped image which saw the Chinese as a racially inferior people that posed a moral and economic threat to the country. This view was scorned by the socialists who attacked the 'enemies of the workers' for their part in creating this distorted picture and fostering the current racial prejudices. After the Chinese Revolution of 1912 the Maoriland Worker stated that 'Forever must go the quite silly notion that the Chinese are inferior and obsolete.'⁹³

The internationalists spared no effort to inform the New Zealand workers that the widely held fears of the economic dangers of the Chinese were unfounded. The Chinese were regularly portrayed as loyal sympathisers with the Labour movement. To drive this point home the attitude of the Chinese workers during strikes was emphasised. In 1913 Holland applauded the Chinese who refused to serve 'blacklegs' with vegetables while at the same time he decried the actions of white unionists who betrayed worker solidarity.⁹⁴ A strike by Chinese labourers in German Samoa against low wages was hailed as an example to white workers, especially because the Chinese workers did not 'scab' on each other.⁹⁵ The praise given to the Chinese by the radicals when discussing industrial action was in marked contrast to the attitude of the moderate unionists and is particularly significant in the context of the strike being the key strategy of the militants in their class struggle.

93. MW 12 January 1912

94. MW 7 February 1913

95. MW 13 October 1911

When the radicals discussed the question of alien immigration and settlement the same principle of racial equality was not forgotten. In 1908 the Commonweal wrote that 'Socialists recognise the foreigners have the same right as ourselves to live and enjoy life in this or any other country. Yes, even the Chinamen, the Jap or the Hindoo.'⁹⁶ It was recognised that if New Zealand was underpopulated then the Europeans had no 'moral right to keep more numerous races out.'⁹⁷

While these basic principles were held a wholesale influx of Asians into the country was not advocated as long as a capitalist economy existed. If there was any possibility that immigrants were going to work for less than the New Zealand workers' wage, then such immigration was undesirable. Writing as the 'Vag' in the Maoriland Worker, E.J. Howard expressed his sympathy with the Chinese, but strongly defended the view that 'any fellow - white, black, copper-coloured, or chow' who would threaten wages in New Zealand had to be resisted.⁹⁸ The opposition of the socialists to cheap labour was economic and void of any racial overtones.

At a public meeting at Waimamakau in 1908, a socialist, Harrison, attempted to formulate a concise statement on the unrestricted mixing of Chinese and Whites. His view was that, as the Chinese had reached the Europeans' ethical standard and would not allow the capitalists to use them as tools to lower the standard of living, they should be allowed

96. Commonweal 1 June 1908

97. Commonweal January 1907

98. MW 29 March 1912

entrance.⁹⁹ Harrison made one qualification to this statement and that was, that if the Chinese were diseased, morally or physically, they should be kept out. However this isolation did not make the Chinamen 'any less our brother.' Whether this qualification reflected a niggling doubt in his own mind over his initial proposal, or was made to make his views more palatable to his audience it is not clear. Either way, the qualification was broad enough to be used by a racist who would wish to justify exclusionist policies.

When the moderates conducted their campaign for defence in 1911 and 1912 the militant wing of the Labour movement was a strong opponent of it. The 'Red Feds' and socialists took the classical Marxist approach that rejected militarism in all its forms and asserted international working class solidarity. At a New Zealand Socialist Party executive meeting in 1909 those present issued the following statement:

believing as we do, that there is no cause existing for enmity between the great working classes of every nation, we seek to destroy the militant and jingo spirit.¹⁰⁰

With the arrival of Mills and the moderate's campaign, the socialists gave a great deal of attention of the race and military arguments. Compulsory military training was vigorously condemned through the columns of the Maoriland Worker and when the Peace Council was formed it soon attract-

99. Commonweal 1 June 1908

100. New Zealand Socialist Party, Annual Conference and National Executive Minutes (1909-1913). University of Canterbury Library, MSS62 and 65 p25.

ed the support of the anti-militaristic Labour radicals.¹⁰¹
 The 1912 Socialist Party annual conference reaffirmed its earlier statement, and declared itself 'uncompromisingly hostile to all forms of militarism.'¹⁰²

The commitment of the radicals to this stance led logically to a rejection of the 'Yellow Peril'. Labour politicians in Australia and New Zealand who highlighted the dangers of Japan were condemned harshly by the editors of the Maoriland Worker.

The left wing of the Labour movement was fortunate to have in the country during the 1911-1912 agitation a leading Australian socialist, Harry Scott Bennett. Bennett's stance on the issue was well known and, as a firm believer in the brotherhood of man, he had been the only opponent of the racial purity clause at the 1905 Australian Labour Party Conference.¹⁰³ His visit to New Zealand has been remembered for the debates with Mills on the unity issue. Both men vividly represented the different wings of the Labour movement and their divergent views also applied to the 'Yellow Peril' issue.

At a meeting on 21 May 1911 Bennett made a comprehensive attack on Defence mania. He called the Military Training Act a device to 'overawe the workers lest they should develop an organised desire to better their conditions.'¹⁰⁴ He also

101. B.S. Gustafson, Labour's Path to Political Independence: the origins and establishment of the New Zealand Labour Party, 1900-19. Auckland, Auckland University Press 1980 p106.

102. New Zealand Socialist Party. Report of fifth annual conference 7,8,9 April 1912, Wellington, Maoriland Worker 1912 p3.

103. H.McQueen, Social Sketches of Australia, 1888-1975 Harmondsworth, Middlesex. Penguin Books 1979 p116.

104. Voice of Labour 2 June 1911

rejected the rationalisations for defence and claimed that 'Japan is a bogey, there is no yellow peril, the whole thing is an invention of the sensational press.' Any threat that Japan might be in the future would, he assured, be nullified by the 'efforts of International socialism' within that country.

These assurances of Bennett's were not greeted warmly by the moderates who made a special effort to counter the beliefs of 'those dreamers ... who preach the brotherhood of man.' Mills argued that white workers should reject the teachings of the 'European Internationalists' in consideration of the 'honour of their wives and daughters and their own respect as white men.'¹⁰⁵ Grave doubts were thrown on the ability of Bennett's 'Japanese Socialist comrades' to convince the 'whole of Asia that it would be against the ethics of human brotherhood to make war on the white race.'¹⁰⁶ The socialism advocated by writers such as Bennett and Montefiore was regarded by the racists as a misconstruction of Marx's 'workers of the world unite.' It was considered that the application of such teaching would be a 'step backwards into barbarism.'¹⁰⁷

Class war rhetorics was not the prerogative of the militant socialists. Moderates and racists often talked in terms of 'exploitation of the workers', the 'capitalist threat' and of 'emancipation of the workers', but did not see

105. Otago Daily Times 23 September 1911

106. Voice of Labour 2 June 1911

107. *Ibid* 9 February 1912

that this led to giving up their racist views. Some who had identified with the socialist movement in its early years were avid racists later on. W.P.Black had been the secretary of the New Zealand Socialist Party in 1909 yet was chiefly responsible for the overtly racist rhetoric that appeared in the columns of the Voice of Labour two years later. Class war and race war were not always regarded as mutually exclusive concepts and many held to both without perceiving any apparent conflict.

While some advocates of radical political ideas held to conservative racial attitudes the converse situation was not to be found. No moderate Labour spokesman advocated racial views which stressed equality and tolerance. The condemnation of racial prejudice only came from the socialist wing of the Labour movement. The conservatives were solidly for a White New Zealand and clung tenaciously to their racially-discriminating policies.

The propagation of views of racial equality and tolerance was done by a small but highly influential group in the Labour movement. Many individuals who were later to play decisive roles in shaping the development of the Labour movement were among those that challenged the racist line in the movement. They had still to wait a few more years before they could break the monopoly that the racist policies had in the Labour movement.

CHAPTER IV: THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST CHALLENGE
1916 - 1921

The failure of the 1912 and 1913 strikes and the way with its appeal to patriotism, ended the period of 'Red Fed' industrial militancy in New Zealand. The United Federation of Labour, which had been the backbone of militant unionism, was crippled by the strike defeats and declined towards its end. From 1913 to 1916 the leaders of the Federation were forced to rethink their tactics with the result that an alliance was made with the moderate wing of the Labour movement. This was achieved in July 1916 when the New Zealand Labour Party was created.

The formation of the Party brought about the formal unity of political labour in the country. The first national executive, led by James McCombs, included old radicals such as Holland, Semple and Fraser as well as a moderate like Paul.¹ The presence of the 'Red Fed' leaders in the Party was the most significant aspect of its formation as it indicated that an important shift of position had been taken by them. Although their socialist objectives were unchanged, the methods by which they sought to achieve them were. Disillusioned with industrial unionism they now sought their ends through the accepted political system. They had, in tactics, become reform socialists, throwing off the revolutionary syndicalist mantle.

1. Gustafson, Labour's Path to Political Independence, p93

The formation of the Party was the first major step in Labour's progress towards political importance. The next occurred in 1918 when Holland, Fraser and Semple won, respectively, the seats of Grey, Wellington Central and Wellington South. The death of Hindmarsh, the old moderate parliamentary leader, late in the year and the subsequent promotion of Holland to the chair of the parliamentary caucus completed the coup by the ex-militants. Through them Labour became a significant third voice in Parliament.

One of the paradoxes of this period was that, while Holland and other 'Red Fed' radicals were adopting constitutional methods of reform, there was a revival in industrial militancy. Simultaneously with the political advances a new generation of men committed to syndicalism came into prominence. Leading the way was the New Zealand Waterside Workers' Federation's secretary 'Big Jim' Roberts. In June 1916 Roberts organised a conference between watersiders, railwaymen, drivers and tramwaymen which established the Transport Workers Advisory Board. The steps towards creating a new militant industrial organisation continued in May 1919 when the New Zealand Alliance of Labour was formed. The Alliance of Labour comprised the groups from the Transport Workers Advisory Board as well as the new national federations of the seamen, country workers and freezing workers. The formation of the Alliance dealt the final blow to the United Federation of Labour which wound up in July 1921.

Roberts, once described as the 'uncrowned King of New Zealand', was ably supported by men such as A. McLagan, an early New Zealand Communist, A. Cook, F. P. Walsh and W. T. Young. These men and the unions they represented were contemptuous

of political activity and critical of the Labour parliamentarians. Politically they were sympathetic to the New Zealand Communist Party, established in 1921. In 1919 their industrial outlook was reflected through the Maoriland Worker when Will Kraig, an anti-political unionist, became editor of the paper.

Throughout the immediate post-war years this ideological division characterized the Labour movement. Although Holland and his colleagues desired to see an understanding between political and industrial Labour, the militants were not. However, with the arrival of an economic slump in late 1921 and 1922 the militants were forced to moderate their attitudes. Rising unemployment weakened the unions and wage reductions from the Arbitration Court showed the militants that co-operation with the political Labour movement was necessary if they were to be effective in defending workers' interests. In 1924 the Alliance was re-organised with a constitution first proposed in 1919 by the Federation of Labour and became more closely linked with the Labour Party.² Although total unity was not achieved a working relationship was formed with each group recognising the value of the other.

The fears that many New Zealanders had expressed over Asian immigration during 1910-1912 dissipated when the country joined the war. The preoccupation with the war gave no opportunity for the concerns that had marked the pre-war years. Japan's commitment to the allies undermined much of

2. B.M.Brown, The Rise of New Zealand Labour; a history of the New Zealand Labour Party from 1910 to 1940. Wellington. Price Milburn 1962. p52.

the 'Yellow Peril' talk and, with the depletion of the work force, trade unions were in no position to argue about Chinese economic competition.

Although the war years saw no popular agitation against Asian immigration the attention of the Government was drawn to the matter during the 1917 and 1918 Imperial War Conferences. At the 1911 Conference Indian politicians had expressed concern over the immigration laws of the other Dominions. This was picked up at the 1917 Conference when the Indian delegates sought a definitive statement on the issue. An agreement was decided on at the Conference which recognised the right of each dominion to establish laws that, by curbing immigration, would control the composition of the population of that country.³ The agreement stipulated that British citizens, regardless of racial origin, were allowed entry into any British country for the purposes of pleasure, commerce and education; that wives and minor children of permanently settled Indians be permitted entry; and that the Indian government could reciprocate laws or conditions that were imposed on Indian subjects in another dominion.

The issue of Indian immigration was a relatively recent one for New Zealand. The Indian component of Asian immigration to New Zealand had not been very significant prior to the war. For the first eight years of the century about 162 Indian migrants came to the country. However from 1909 to

3. M. Olliver ed. The Colonial and Imperial Conferences from 1887 to 1937. Ottawa, Queen's Printer 1954 3 Vols Vol II p276.

1914 the rate of immigration increased and over 1130 Indians entered New Zealand.⁴ While most of these continued their travels to Pacific Island destinations some remained and began to form the nucleus of New Zealand's Indian community.

During the war years the political developments in the Labour movement moved ahead of the formation of policy on non-European immigration. The old conflict between the racist policies of the Trades Councils and the internationalism of the militants had not been resolved, but merely laid aside. It was inevitable, then, that the Labour movement would address itself again to the issue of coloured labour.

Late in the war a serious effort was made to produce a policy on non-European immigration that satisfied the demands of pragmatic unionism and internationalist ideology. Discussions on the issue were held at the New Zealand Trade Union Congress of July 1917. This conference was particularly important because it was held the year after the crucial developments in the political and industrial wings of the Labour movement took place. Present were over 80 delegates from the Trades Councils, the major Federations and numerous trade unions, including members of the Transport Workers Advisory Board. The President of the Conference was E.J.Howard and other leading delegates included W.Young, J.Roberts, H.Hunter, T.Bloodworth, W.Parry, J.T.Paul, M.J.Savage, H.Holl-

4. T.G.McGee, 'The Indian Community in Wellington City; a geographical contribution to the study of assimilation.' Unpub MA Thesis. Victoria University of Wellington 1961 p58.

and and M.Fagan.⁵

The discussion of coloured labour was initiated by J.Dickson of the New Zealand Amalgamated Society of Engineers. His motion put to the conference read: 'That the question of the introduction of coloured labour into the Dominion be dealt with by Congress, and representations be made to the Government against the same.'⁶ It was seconded by Hunter who informed delegates of correspondence that had taken place between himself and the Minister for Internal Affairs on the subject. Hunter had insisted that wages and working conditions for coloured labourers in New Zealand should be the same as those of the Europeans. The Minister's reply to the National Executive of the Trades Councils was that this condition would be met.⁷

The debate which followed the opening formalities revealed a clear division of opinion by delegates on the topic. A number present openly stated that their opposition to coloured immigration was founded on moral and racial grounds. Others rejected racial prejudice but still stressed the need to guard against cheap coloured labour. Some of the comments by racists at the Conference led Bloodworth to remark that he 'feared that the Creator had made a mistake in making coloured men, if they were to judge from the attitude of certain delegates.'

5. New Zealand Trade Union Congress. 1917 conferences:
NZ trade unions and United Federation of Labour.
Wellington. Maoriland Worker 1917. p5-7.

6. Ibid p18.

7. CTLC Ordinary Minutes 20 January 1917.

Although the debate revealed a number of fundamental differences between the delegates there was a consensus that coloured immigration should be stopped. The motion was carried by a unanimous vote.

The discussion on the issue probably would have gone no further if it had not been for unexpected circumstances. The debate on the motion was held on the afternoon of the second day of the conference and the day's adjournment took place before the delegates had concluded their discussion. Voting on the motion did not take place until the following morning. When the delegates assembled on the third day, they were informed that the representative for the Coal Miners' Federation, J. Arbuckle, had had to return to the West Coast. His place at the Conference was taken by Harry Holland, and it was the unexpected presence of Holland that resulted in an important change in the Conference's treatment of the coloured labour issue.

Immediately following the vote on the motion, Holland took the initiative and moved that a sub-committee be set up to prepare a statement on the cheap labour question. This was agreed to and a committee of Holland, G. Hunter, F. Cornwell, G. Manning and W.E. Richards was formed. Later that day the committee presented its report to the conference. It read as follows;

This Conference recognises the coloured man's inalienable right to live, and consequently to work. It raises no barrier of race or nationality, and fully recognises that, in whatever country, the working class struggle for freedom is the same. Accordingly this Conference recommends to the various unions that the surest way to prevent coloured workers already in New Zealand from being used to reduce the white workers' standard of living is to organise them into unions of the

industries in which they are engaged.

This Conference further urges that it should be legally enacted that all coloured workers be paid the standard wages ruling in the industry, and that heavy penalties be provided for employers paying less than such standard.

That indentured coloured or white labour from any country whatever be prohibited by statutory law, and, further, that any influx of unindentured coloured labourers be similarly prohibited.

That Conference urge the New Zealand Government to protest to the Imperial Government against the system of indentured labour from India that is now being operated in Fiji.⁸

After a lengthy and heated debate on the report it was accepted by the conference. The only detail given on the vote in the official report was that sixteen delegates voted against the report.⁹

The report adopted by the Conference represented an important development in the attitudes and policies of the Labour movement to non-white labour in a number of ways. Although the humanitarian and internationalist views contained in the report were not new to the movement the emphasis accorded them at this Conference signified a more widespread acceptance of them. Holland had been concerned at the tone of the earlier debate because, in his motion to adopt the report, he urged delegates not to 'surrender the international Fundamental [sic] of the working class movement.' In this respect the 1917 Conference was in marked contrast to the

8. 1917 Trade Union Congress p20

9. Ibid p21.

Trades Councils' conference of ten years earlier when the White New Zealand policy and other racially-discriminating policies dominated.

It would be misleading, though, to suggest that the 1917 Conference showed that the Labour movement had abandoned its racist policies and embraced the tenets of internationalism. Racists were still a powerful group in the movement and anti-Asian feeling was found in a number of quarters. In the debates members of unions allied to the Transport Workers Advisory Board were particularly strong in presenting racist views. The delegates from the Auckland Tramways Union expressed strong opposition to any form of toleration of coloured labour. Carter was emphatic that neither he nor members of his union would work alongside Indians who were objectionable on 'every ground particularly for racial reasons.' The other delegate, Richardson, equally as adamant in opposing coloured labour was critical of the 'sentimentalism of internationalism' expressed by Holland. A union closely related to the Tramways' union, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants mirrored perfectly the policies of the former. R. More, from the Society, instanced a case in the railways when his union had been successful in getting coloured labour discharged, even though these workers were receiving full union wages.

The key group of the Advisory Board, the Waterside Workers, were represented by Roberts, J.G. Bruce and G.L. Glover.

Both Bruce and Glover were determined to ensure that strong immigration and union membership policies were adopted by the Conference. On each of the two days when the coloured

issue was discussed Glover introduced motions which called for the absolute prohibition of coloured immigration to New Zealand. Bruce was concerned at the innocent naivety of those who spoke of the brotherhood of man and related his experiences in Vancouver where coloured workers had displaced white men. This led him to argue that if coloured workers were permitted entry into New Zealand unions then they would quickly dominate the union movement.

Roberts' views at the Congress were contradictory. On the second day of Conference he claimed that he had no objection to any man's colour, and that among coloured men were some of the best unionists. However the following day when confronted by the practical implications of Holland's internationalism he objected strongly to admitted coloured men into unions. The reason for this, he claimed, was that the 'Hindu was a born crawler, and could never be brought up to the standard of the white man.'¹⁰

Although the internationalists had made an important contribution to the Labour movement's policies towards coloured immigrants, the old racialists, both at the Conference and after it, continued to influence the Labour movement. Writing in the Labour column of the Otago Daily Times a few weeks after the Conference J.T. Paul discussed a visit by the Victorian Labour leader, Elmslie, to the Pacific Islands and the United States. On his return to Australia Elmslie was reported to have said that he regarded the White Australia

10. 1917 Trade Union Congress, p18,20.

policy as the 'supreme issue' facing the white dominions in the Pacific.¹¹ He had left Australia convinced of the importance of the policy but, after hearing the cry for cheap oriental labour in the islands, returned holding it to be 'an absolute religion.'

In Paul's comments on this he acknowledged the widely held view that the coloured labour question was one of economics but believed that this was not the central issue. For Paul the crucial aspect lay in the 'physiological' side of the issue; 'the mixture of white and coloured.' He criticised the recent Labour conference for not dealing adequately with this aspect.¹²

After the war had finished there was an increase of Asian immigration to New Zealand which reached a peak in 1920 when the combined total of Chinese and Indian immigrants reached a record level. The 1,477 Chinese and 228 Indians surpassed the early influx of 1871 when 1595 Chinese entered the country.¹³ By 1921 the Chinese population in New Zealand had reached 3,266, the highest of the century. The Indian community in the same year consisted of a modest 671, but this total represented an increase of about 270% from 1916.¹⁴

The beginning of renewed concern over Asian immigration began in the last months of the war. In mid-August 1918 the Wanganui Trades Council wrote to the Canterbury Council

11. Otago Daily Times 14 July 1917

12. Ibid 21 July 1917

13. McGee, 'The Indian Community in Wellington city', p59

14. New Zealand Census 1921 Pt vi Race Aliens p4.

for information on the 'influx of coloured labour.'¹⁵ The reason for the Wanganui Council's concern is unclear as the Canterbury Council's executive, not perceiving any influx, had nothing to offer.

However by the next month they were better informed. On 14 September the same council received a letter from the local Labourers' Union.¹⁶ The Labourers' endorsed with their note a report from one of their members, H.Hill, who claimed that Government-imported Indian labour was being used on public works. Hill was concerned that the Indians were being employed at a time when 'returned soldiers and other white men were unemployed.' The action recommended by the Labourers' Union and eventually adopted by the Council was to meet with the local branch of the R.S.A. A meeting between the Council and the secretary of the R.S.A. took place, but it was inconclusive.

These early fears over Asian immigration were premature as there was no marked upsurge in Asian immigration for 1918. Although Indian immigration rose from 92 in 1917 to 138 in 1918, its impact on the total Asian figure was offset by a decline of 24 in the number of Chinese immigrants. The pattern of Chinese and Indian immigration for 1918 did not differ greatly from that of the other war years. The concern over the employment of the Indian workers also appears to be unwarranted. The union leaders had been assured that all coloured labour employed by the Government would be paid

15. CTLC Executive Minutes 17 August 1918

16. Ibid 14 September 1918; Ordinary Minutes 14 Sept. 1918.

union rates and there was no suggestion in this 1918 incident that the Indian workers were being paid low wages.

1919 was a crucial year for the white dominions of the Pacific as, in the aftermath of the war, there was a great deal of apprehension expressed over how relations with the coloured races of Asia would develop. The war itself had been interpreted by some race writers as the 'white man's civil war' which resulted in a weakening of white supremacy across the globe.¹⁷ At the Versailles Peace Conference, Japan requested that formal recognition of the racial equality of the Japanese with the white peoples be written into the Covenant of the League of Nations.¹⁸ This move was opposed by New Zealand and Australia who were determined to maintain their exclusionist immigration policies and defend the underlying principle of racial superiority. The failure of the Japanese to gain this recognition did not resolve the matter, particularly for the southern Dominions. The Labour daily newspaper, the Grey River Argus, wrote, following the Conference, that the question of racial equality and the 'inevitable conflict for the mastery of the Pacific' was not closed and that the 'Yellow Peril' was a very alive issue.¹⁹

It was against this background that the Labour movement began discussions at a national level on racial problems. At the fourth annual Conference of the New Zealand Agricultur-

17. See L. Stoddard The Rising Tide of Color against White World Supremacy, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921

18. I. F. G. Milner New Zealand's Interests and Policies in the Far East. New York, Institute of Pacific Relations 1940 p18.

19. Grey River Argus 19 June 1919

al and Pastoral Workers' Union in 1919, a remit was passed which called on the Government to legislate against the increased migration of Indians.²⁰ Speaking for the remit, Mee stated that the New Zealand workers could not work with the backward Indians and that the preservation of the race made the resolution necessary. Mee's justification for immigration restrictions rested heavily on a prejudicial view of Indian workers. However only a month later another leading member of the union, W. Parry, offered a different opinion on the nature of the coloured worker. In his capacity as secretary of the Auckland Flaxworkers' Union Parry had found the Indian to be an 'excellent unionist' and, contrary to the accepted belief, their living quarters were 'perfectly clean.'²¹

Late in 1919 the Labour Party Conference spent a great deal of time discussing coloured immigration and employment. The report of the Committee on Immigration included the full text of the statement from the 1917 Conference.²² Particular emphasis was placed on the worker solidarity clause and its concomitant policy of organising coloured workers into unions. A specific detail on the immigration issue was added which recommended that an education test of a third standard examination be given to prospective immigrants.

20. MW 18 June 1919

21. United Federation of Labour, NZ Conferences Wellington July 1919: United Federation of Labour 6th annual conference; NZ Labour Party, 3rd annual conference. Wellington. Maoriland Worker 1919 p35.

22. Ibid

The education test clause received sharp criticism from a number of delegates. Holland felt that the test would debar European socialists who wished to come to New Zealand. This situation Holland feared, would hinder the progress of the New Zealand Labour movement. Walter Nash, an admirer of the East, felt that an immigrant who failed to pass a test in third standard English might nevertheless be a 'perfect storehouse of knowledge and wisdom for deeper and more profound than what we call education.' Despite a plea by Barter, who presented the report, to adopt the education clause as a measure to halt Indian immigration, it was deleted from the report.

In late October 1919 the Returned Soldiers Association began its battle against Asian immigration. At the annual conference of the Association it was decided to request the Government to amend the Immigration Restriction Act and halt the flow of Chinese and Indian migrants.²³ The Conference also affirmed the principle of a White New Zealand. The R.S.A's campaign was to intensify during the following year and, with certain Labour bodies, it spearheaded the anti-Asian agitation. The loose alliance forged between the two groups arose out of common bond. Many returned soldiers were unionists and saw both the R.S.A. and local Labour organisations as sympathetic allies against the alleged Asian economic competition.

The first major contribution to the 1920 campaign for exclusion was initiated in April when Auckland's three Labour

23. Quick March 10 November 1919 p71.

Members of Parliament, Savage, Parry and Bartram, forwarded a protest to the Prime Minister. In a telegram to Massey they stated that:

In view of the alarming influx of Asiatics and other classes of cheap labour, involving as it must, the lowering of the living standard of our people, as well as the probable deterioration in the physical standard of all races mixing indiscriminately, we ask that steps be immediately taken to deal with this menace.²⁴

The lead taken by the Labour politicians was followed by a statement from the Auckland watersiders. At a meeting held in late April the watersiders issued a resolution which called for an immediate halt to Asian immigration. These measures were necessary on the following grounds:

1. The influx of Asiatics to this country can only have one ending - the lowering of the standard of living of the workers.
2. The fusion of the Asiatics and whites will produce a piebald population.
3. Unfair competition in all trades and callings.
4. If immigration is permitted, by all means give preference to England, Ireland or Scotland.
5. We condemn the Government for its failure to cope with this serious menace, and favour a White and not a piebald New Zealand.²⁵

In May the watersiders continued their attack and referred the issue to the Transport Workers' Advisory Board for immediate action.²⁶ By 2 June the Auckland Star reported that the watersiders had decided that, after a certain date,

24. Auckland Star 20 April 1920

25. Ibid 28 April 1920

26. Ibid 28 May 1920.

vessels carrying Asians would not be worked. An official of the Union claimed that the situation had reached an 'acute stage' and action that the Star had earlier described as 'unconstitutional and highly dangerous' had now become necessary.

The threat of direct action was of concern to the Union Steamship Company which felt that the move was detrimental to its interests. In a communique to Roberts, W.A. Kennedy of the Company pointed out that the proposed course would only 'precipitate trouble, as being "common carriers" we cannot legally refuse to carry Asiatics so long as they comply with the legal conditions governing their entry into the Dominion.'²⁷ Roberts replied swiftly and denied that the reported resolution was carried.²⁸ The situation, according to Roberts, was that the meeting reported in the Auckland Star only made a protest against Asian immigration to the Government through the national organisation of the Advisory Board. Roberts' assurance to the company that the watersiders would not resort to illegal action was the final word in the affair.

The protests by, first, the Labour politicians, and then the watersiders in Auckland arose because most Asian immigrants to New Zealand offloaded at the Auckland port. It was then, at this city that the sense of an 'influx' was more keenly felt. The significant aspect of these early protestations

27. Kennedy to Roberts 11 June 1920. Roberts papers (Victoria University of Wellington Library) B96.

28. Roberts to Kennedy 17 June 1920

is that they came from groups that were, on political and industrial matters, advocates of left-wing views. The statements by the three parliamentarians showed that not all internationalists were agreed on the racial aspects of non-European immigration. Parry had been very outspoken against racial prejudice in the Labour movement, but his views were not shared entirely by his colleagues. Savage in the past had often referred to the biological component of inter-racial relations but had confessed that no firm conclusions could be made.²⁹

A similar ambiguity existed in the case of the water-side workers. Although they held to radical working-class ideology, their comments on Asian immigration contained an explicit racism with references to a 'White New Zealand' and a 'piebald New Zealand'. The attitudes which the water-side union officials had shown since 1917 indicated that commitment to Labour radicalism did not guarantee that internationalists racial views would predominate. Prior to the war racism and internationalism were in a conflict situation, but after the war the lines were less well drawn.

In 1919 the official magazine of the Waterside Workers' Union, the New Zealand Transport Worker, outlined a different line of action. Suggestions that Chinese indentured labour might be introduced into New Zealand to work in the coal mines or on the wharves and ships, led the magazine to discuss the coloured labour issue at length. The editor saw the problem

29. New Zealand Labour Party 1919 Conference p35.

as one between union labour demanding a reasonable standard of living and cheap indentured labour with a very low standard of living.³⁰ The battle was not one of coloured versus white workers. The editorial claimed that:

there are hundreds of coloured men in New Zealand who are good unionists, and who demand just as high a standard of living as the white-skinned wage-workers.

With these men we have not now, and never had, any quarrel, and we welcome them as trade unionists into our organisation.

This was the standard internationalist line, but it was in marked contrast to Robert's blunt refusal to allow coloured workers into the union and the attitude of the Auckland watersiders in 1920.

The agitation in Auckland continued in June 1920 when the Auckland Grocers' Assistants Union made a protest against 'unrestricted competition' by Asians in business.³¹ The secretary of the Union, J.H. Mortensen, drew attention to the growing proliferation of Chinese and Indian shops in Taranaki and Auckland. The Grocers were supported by the Chemists' and the Drapers' Assistants Unions, both of which felt that the interests of their members were directly affected by the alleged competition.

The same month the Auckland Furniture Trade Industrial Union of Workers sought assistance from other local unions and the Auckland branch of the R.S.A. after it had learnt that a Chinese furniture factory had opened in the city.³²

30. New Zealand Transport Worker 1 November 1919

31. Press 10 June 1920

32. Auckland Star 10 June 1920; 9 July 1920.

The Auckland General Labourers' Union immediately rallied behind its fellow unions and promised to take the matter up with Members of Parliament. The Labourers' efforts were not fruitless and they received many sympathetic replies from members of the House.³³

By June the agitation had spread down to Christchurch. On 5 June the Canterbury Trades Council executive received a letter from the Taranaki Workers' Council which urged a strong protest against Asian immigration. An ordinary meeting of the Council on the same day passed the Auckland Council's remit to the United Federation of Labour conference which called for a pronouncement on coloured labour.³⁴

Early in July a group of labourers working on the Lyttelton-Sumner Road went on strike when the Public Works Department hired five Indians to do contract work on the construction.³⁵ A meeting of the labourers decided that they would not work with 'black' labour and their spokesmen, T. Clarke and F. O'Malley, were successful in getting the Indians removed from the site. The workers' protest was a spontaneous one and caused some embarrassment for the local General Labourers' Union. When approached by the local press the Union's secretary, F. Worrall, said that he had known nothing of the dispute and was therefore reluctant to state the Union's attitude. He preferred to wait until the

33. Press 18 June 1920; Auckland Star 17 June 1920; 9 July 1920

34. CTLC Executive Minutes 5 June 1920; Ordinary Minutes 5 June 1920.

35. Press 3 July 1920.

wider issue of coloured labour was discussed at the Federation of Labour conference.³⁶

In the context of a growing national awareness of the 'problem' of coloured labour this dispute received a good deal of comment. Critics of Labour were quick to point out the glaring contradiction between the practical and theoretical policies of official Labour. On 6 July the Press leader writer made a cutting attack on the Labour movement's ambivalence. The paper quoted from the manifesto of the local Labour Representation Committee which contained the following socialist clause:

ALL HUMAN BEINGS, irrespective of race, colour, creed, sex or nationality, shall have an equal opportunity to live the fullest human life possible for them in human society.³⁷

The editorial challenged the Evans Pass workers and their allies, the Lyttelton Waterside Workers' Union, to reconcile these views with the action taken toward the Indian workers. The article concluded by suggesting that the 'doctrine of the "brotherhood of man" is not vigorous enough to withstand the strain of being put into practice, and as though not for the first time, prejudice has conquered sentiment.' Further justification for the Press' comments came on 8 July when sixty to seventy European workers in Masterton staged a protest at the arrival of seven Indian scrub-cutters.³⁸ This was seen as further evidence that

36. Ibid 3 July 1920

37. Ibid 6 July 1920

38. Ibid 9 July 1920

Labour's 'brotherhood of man' talk was only 'window dressing.'³⁹

Similar criticisms came from other newspapers⁴⁰ and, in Parliament, Harris claimed that, while the great majority of the workers upheld the principle of a White New Zealand, Labour leaders were not as advanced in the matter as the rank and file.⁴¹

For the Labour movement the Evans Pass disturbance was of some help because it focussed attention on the issue and made an evasion of the difficulties impossible. The timing of the incident was fortuitous in some respects because many Labour statements on the coloured labour and immigration issues were non-committal. With the criticism of Labour's attitudes many Labour supporters and officials attempted to clarify the situation, particularly in the contexts of notions of working class solidarity and class struggle.

The expression of racial prejudice by the workers came under attack from within Labour circles as well as from without. In a letter to the Press a unionist, Ben Pratt, expressed his shame that fellow unionists and Europeans acted in the 'heartless' manner they did.⁴² The fault, he felt, lay in the arrogance and hypocrisy of the English people who were full of inconsistencies in their humanitarian outlook. Hubert Armstrong, a prominent Labour leader, con-

39. Ibid 10 July 1920

40. Auckland Star, 2 July 1920

41. NZPD Vol 186 p205

42. Press, 6 July 1920.

fessed that he was in difficulty over the matter. He objected to any form of colour discrimination but still believed that Asian immigration had to be resisted because it worked against the welfare of the workers by threatening the standard of living.⁴³

Sullivan, the Labour member for Avon, was reluctant to give his views as he did not wish to anticipate the forthcoming conference. However, he stated that he was entirely in favour of a White New Zealand and thought that the white workers in the country should be protected.⁴⁴ He felt that the workers of New Zealand were rapidly developing a belief that Asians would lead to a deterioration of the workers' conditions. He expected this sentiment to be expressed at the Labour conference, but feared that internationalism may moderate it. A letter from 'Wage Earner' to the Press supported Sullivan in his observations. 'Wage Earner' warned readers that 'Labour cannot afford to sink the instinct of self-preservation irrespective of the instinct of race-preservation.'⁴⁵

When the delegates to the Fourth Annual Conference of the United Federation of Labour and the New Zealand Labour Party met in July to formulate policy on coloured labour and immigration this conflict of views was clearly evident. The conference was addressed by Major-General Sir A.H. Russell, president of the recently-formed National Defence League of

43. Auckland star 6 July 1920

44. Ibid

45. Press 10 July 1920

New Zealand. The presence of Sir Andrew at the Conference was a bonus for the advocates of conservative race views. The League that he represented was committed to two key ends: the maintenance of a White New Zealand, and the security of the country from invasion. He was like a ghost dug up from the past, passing off as Mills or another of the pre-war 'Yellow Peril' campaigners.

While many delegates nodded in agreement with Sir Andrew as he upheld the importance of New Zealand's racial purity it would be misleading to judge the tone of the Conference by his presence. Another group, diametrically opposed to the League, was also active at the Conference. The National Peace Council which, by its own admission was within the Labour movement, made special representations to the conference to ensure that the coloured labour issue received proper treatment. The Council sought an end to exploitation by imperialist and capitalist forces and to this end recognised the right of self-determination of the natives races of the earth.⁴⁶

The Council's representation to the Conference called for the delegates to remember that 'the most vital side of the Labour Movement is its International Character.'⁴⁷ The crucial question to be considered was whether unionists could object to Indians or other coloured workers if they conformed to all the rules governing the Labour movement. Could they be admitted if they took out union membership,

46. Ibid 29 June 1920

47. Grey River Argus 20 September 1920

were paid union rates, were decently housed and fought against exploitation? The normal reply to this question was in the negative and arose from a belief that coloured workers were morally and socially inferior to the whites. This answer was, according to the Council, unsatisfactory and reflected some grave misconceptions. The Council defined 'Inferiority' as one of degree with the coloured worker subjected to a deeper degree of 'slavery' than the New Zealand worker. The response of Labour to this should be to work alongside coloured workers and assist them to 'cast off their chains.'

At the Conference delegates reached a compromise between the racist and internationalist views. The White New Zealand and racial purity aspects of the League were not endorsed but, at the same time, the Conference avoided the equality policies of the Peace Council. The report of the Committee on Immigration stated that:

at the present time Asiatics are being induced to come here by capitalistic combinations, and that when they are here, because of their generally low educational standard, and because of the fault that their standard of living is not equal to that of Europeans, they are used, and will be used by these combinations as cheap labour to the detriment of white workers, as a means to lower wages, and reduce the standard of living.⁴⁸

A proviso warned against the presence of large numbers of permanent Asian residents in the country. This situation, it was felt, would result in an 'intermingling of the races, detrimental to all.' Further provisions included the use of an education test set for a sixth standard pass, and a sugg-

48. MW 25 August 1920

estion that Asians admitted should be employed in industry under award conditions. It was recommended that the Imperial Government inform Asian countries of the conditions and incorporate them into any treaties or agreements that might be made.

The proviso was worded in such a way that racists at the Conference would be satisfied that their views were stated, while at the same time it ensured that the bigoted racial views which the internationalists rejected were not included. The inclusion of the education test was also a compromise provision. Some delegates wanted a complete exclusion of Asian immigrants from the country, but this was not approved of by the internationalists. Therefore a sixth standard education test, more stringent than the third standard test rejected at the 1919 Conference, was suggested as a move to restrict the numbers of Asian immigrants.

Internationalists at the conference were concerned over the attitudes that parts of the Labour movement had expressed over Asian immigration. Kennedy felt that the political side of the movement was international but he 'was satisfied that the industrial side was not.' This point had been graphically illustrated by the Christchurch incident just before conference. Worrall, who had obviously been embarrassed by the prejudiced actions of members of his union, was able to air his personal views at the conference. He challenged delegates not to lose sight of the international aspect and questioned the sincerity of some when they spoke about the brotherhood of man.

A full expression of internationalism was hindered by an imprecise definition of what international ideals meant in regard to racial issues. For most it meant racial equality, tolerance, and co-operation. However the biological aspect of inter-racial matters caused many internationalists to moderate their views to suit their prejudices. Hickey told delegates at the conference that it was their 'duty to keep New Zealand white. Internationalism did not mean a reckless intermingling of white and coloured races.' This difficulty was not confined to delegates at the Conference. Soon after the conference George Koller, once a Political Labour League candidate, wrote that 'Internationalism does not require a deep affection for Japanese, Chinese, Hindus and all other peoples personally; it requires that all men, regardless of nationality, shall be accorded justice.'⁴⁹ For a number of Labour leaders internationalism was held in such a way that it could accommodate their racist views.

The racist line in the Labour movement received an unchecked expression at the Timber Workers' Conference which was held concurrently with the Labour Party's Conference. The Timber Workers requested the Government to amend the Immigration Act and to halt the flow of Asian immigrants. They also reaffirmed the principle of a White New Zealand.⁵⁰ Later in July members of the Westland branch of the union protested against the employment of Asians on trading vessels

49. Timaru Herald 17 July 1920

50. LT 7 July 1920

working at Greymouth. The union threatened to cut off the supply of cargo if the situation arose again.⁵¹

Labour parliamentarians did not discuss the 'colour problem' in Parliament until Peter Fraser made a comment on Asians with reference to Wellington's housing problem. The overcrowded conditions of housing in Wellington had been a major concern to local Labour groups and Fraser had taken a leading role in arousing interest in it. On 4 August he gave a new slant on the problem when he claimed that Indians and Chinese were buying houses in Wellington.⁵² These sales usually involved the eviction of the families occupying them because the houses were used for storage purposes. Fraser was concerned at this because, if it continued, 'racial difficulties would arise, and racial animosities would be intensified.'

Massey's government had been quick to respond to the pressure for restrictive measures and on 11 August the Immigration Restriction Amendment Bill was introduced into Parliament. It became law on 9 November but was not gazetted until 13 January 1921. The main provisions of the act were simple and cleared up much of the complicated workings of earlier legislation. People not of British birth or parentage were not permitted entry to New Zealand unless they possessed an entry permit. This permit was only obtainable by an advance postal application and it was granted at the sole discretion of the Minister of Customs. Naturalised

51. Grey River Argus 31 July 1920

52. NZPD Vol 186 p1033

British subjects and 'aboriginal natives' of any part of the Empire, except New Zealand, were not regarded as British for the purposes of the act. This latter clause was directed specifically against Indians, but this was not stated in the act.

The Bill, claimed Massey, was the 'result of a deep-seated sentiment on the part of a large majority of the people of this country that this Dominion shall be what is often called a "white" New Zealand.'⁵³ Liberal and Reform members alike followed this argument and made it clear that what was at stake was the racial purity of the country.

The parliamentary Labour party's discussion of the Bill was opened by Holland. Holland indicated to the House that his intention was to 'make clear the international viewpoint, which does not, place a bar upon the individual because of the colour of his skin or the country in which he was born.'⁵⁴ Biological racism was explicitly condemned by Holland as he asserted that the 'same red blood of humanity flows in the veins of all of us, no matter what piece of land we happened to be born upon.' After he had rejected the racial views held by the majority of the conservatives in the House, Holland proceeded to outline the guiding principle for the treatment of the immigration of other races. Of primary importance was the protection of the standard of living in New Zealand against any group, coloured or white,

53. Ibid Vol 187 p905.

54. Ibid p912.

which would threaten to lower it. While the people of New Zealand required this protection, equal treatment should be given to coloured immigrants that resided in the country. Holland felt that Indian labourers presented no problem at all to the New Zealand worker so long as they were organised into unions and paid equal wages. From his own experience he had found that Indian workers made 'excellent unionists' and were 'exceedingly loyal to the rest of the men in the organisation.'⁵⁵

Holland's colleagues also emphasised that their starting point was their commitment to internationalism but unlike Holland, felt that it was compatible with racism. Sullivan strongly reiterated his earlier pledge to maintain racial purity in New Zealand. He argued that internationalism on a 'high' rather than a 'low' basis meant that the competition and 'intermingling with races of a lower standard' had to be avoided.⁵⁶ Parry's approach was similar. He acknowledged the internationalist point of view but also opposed the 'indiscriminate' mixing of races if unrestricted Asian immigration was permitted.⁵⁷

Savage's approach to the immigration of Asians was quite different to that of the other Labour parliamentarians. From as early as 1917 he had argued that the coloured immigration issue had to be decided on a scientific basis. Although he repeated this theme often over the next three years he never showed how science could help to resolve the difficulties.

55. Ibid p913.

56. Ibid p925.

57. Ibid p932.

In a lengthy speech on the issue at the end of July 1920, he stated that it was not for parliamentarians to decide the issue but for scientists, particularly the scientists of the nations concerned.⁵⁸ Just as New Zealanders did not want a 'piebald New Zealand', he was sure that Indians did not want a 'piebald India'. Concern for the purity of the race was not just confined to whites and the rights of other nations had to be recognised. Despite his 'scientific' approach, Savage's treatment of the issue and his concern over the purity of the race was the same as the other racists.

Although the Labour parliamentarians did not oppose the purpose of the Immigration Restriction Amendment Bill they were critical of a number of its details. Their efforts to change some aspects of it were contained in four amendments presented during the committee stages. All four, three introduced by Holland and one by Savage, were defeated.

The first amendment called for a sixth standard test in English and arithmetic, although a Parliamentary Labour Party meeting held on 1 September had carried a motion for a fifth standard test.⁵⁹ The test proposed by Holland had, he claimed, the blessings of Indian workers in New Zealand. After private conversations with Holland some Indian workers expressed approval of the test and claimed that it would aid Indians who might wish to leave India.⁶⁰ The reason for the Indians agreeing to a stricter education test lies, as

58. NZPD Vol 186 p216; Vol 187 p916.

59. NZPD Vol 187 p1019; O'Farrell-Holland Papers. Alexander Turnbull Library.

60. MW 26 Jan 1921; NZPD Vol 187 p917.

Williams suggests, in a wish among the Indians to eliminate further competition from their countrymen.⁶¹

The second and fourth amendments were similar. The first, introduced by Holland, called for the number of Chinese entering the country to be limited to 100. The second, introduced by Savage, set it at 110.

When the Bill was introduced Labour parliamentarians were very critical of a clause which gave the Minister of Customs the authority to 'exempt from all or any of the requirements... of the Act...any person or class of persons entering or desiring to enter New Zealand.'⁶² Observers in the Labour movement felt that this gave the government the ability to introduce Chinese labour should the need arise. Holland's amendment sought to ensure that this would not occur. It proposed that 'in no case shall any such exemptions be made for the purpose of an influx of cheap coloured labour or to bring outside labour from any country, whatever into New Zealand during periods of industrial conflict.'⁶³ The amendment was defeated by a vote of 36 to 20.

Apart from the fourth amendment which was designed to safeguard Labour from a specific danger, the amendments proposed by the Labour parliamentary party sought to tighten the provisions of the Bill. Both the education test and limit proposals would have made entry to New Zealand more difficult for prospective Asian immigrants.

61. J.V.Williams 'A Study of the Gujarati Community in New Zealand' Unpub MA Thesis University of Otago 1976 p79.

62. New Zealand Statutes 1920 p81.

63. NZPD Vol 187 p1020.

For Holland the recommendation of a sixth standard education test was a marked turnabout from the 1919 Labour Party Conference when he opposed a proposal for a third standard test. By 1920 he had dropped his concern that a strict education test might prevent European socialists migrating to New Zealand. Like the other Labour parliamentarians he saw that the education test was directed towards Asian immigrants only. It was regarded by the Labour members as being a necessary measure on the grounds of preserving certain standards in New Zealand. The only type of Asian immigration that Labour would approve was better educated immigrants and the proposed test was designed to achieve this. It was assumed that better educated Asians would pose less of a danger to the social and economic standards to which New Zealand had attained.⁶⁴

Labour's proposals for a specific limit on the number of Chinese immigrants was based on an agreement that had been reached between the governments of China and Canada. This agreement restricted Chinese immigration to Canada to 500 per year. Labour politicians argued that New Zealand, with its smaller population, could adequately take about 100 Chinese immigrants. As McCombs commented, there was a general wish for immigration restrictions, but the problem was to determine the precise measures for checking Chinese immigration. The limit suggestion was one such solution, but it was not approved of by the Liberal and Reform members.

The debates of the Labour parliamentarians showed that the concept of internationalism was interpreted without a

64. NZPD Vol 87 p924-5.

uniform consistency. One of the Liberal members, Hanan, remarked that Holland's opinions were in marked contrast to those of earlier Labour members who were staunch supporters of a White New Zealand policy.⁶⁵ The Maoriland Worker was full of praise for the Labour parliamentarians and claimed that their efforts in the debates did full justice to the 'working class principles of internationalism'.⁶⁶ However the attitudes revealed by the Labour party were not as clear cut as Hanan and the Maoriland Worker would suggest. Holland's interpretation of internationalism differed significantly to that of Sullivan, Savage and, to a lesser degree, Parry. Sullivan was a political moderate, who although he gave lip service to internationalism in the immigration issue, did not differ much from the racists in Liberal and Reform circles. Savage was, politically, a genuine radical, but had not managed to maintain the radical stance in racial matters.

Although the new Act was sufficient to calm the fears of most of the agitators a few remained wary of the situation. A number of Chinese continued to enter the country in the late months of the year, and this was viewed ominously by some observers. Ole Bossen, in a letter to the secretary of the Auckland Seamen's Union, warned of Massey's bias towards the capitalists who he alleged were importing the Chinese. Bossen felt that the Seamen's Union should apply pressure on the government to ensure that its promise to

65. NZPD Vol 187 p921

66. MW 22 September 1920.

keep New Zealand white was carried out and to this end proposed that the 'seamen of New Zealand should refuse to man any vessel which carries Asian Labourers'.⁶⁷ At a monthly meeting held on 8 December the Executive Council of the Seamen's Union discussed a letter from the Wanganui branch of the Wellington Typographical Union which spoke of the 'influx of Chinese, Hindus and Japanese.'⁶⁸ The Council felt that the matter was of the utmost importance and proposed that organised workers in New Zealand should subscribe to a common line of action. The strong rhetoric in both instances came too late and was out of step with development in some areas of the Labour movement where a policy of accommodation with coloured labour was being adopted.

In the industrial wing of the Labour movement anti-pathy towards non-European immigrants had been deeply entrenched. The union movement had, since 1878, been the source of most of the anti-Asian agitation in the country and was one of the more persistent advocates of a White New Zealand. Economic and racial arguments against coloured labour had resulted in a closed-ranks policy to these workers. However during the war and post-war periods this policy was criticised from within the union movement and, with the numerical growth of coloured workers in the country, the relation of these workers to unionism emerged as a major issue.

67. Bossen to Anderson 12 October 1920 ASU Correspondence

68. FSU Executive Council Minutes 8 December 1920.

Like the political Labour movement unions were affected by the integration into their ranks of men with internationalist views. While committed to the pragmatic goals of unionism some were opposed to the racist practices which divided the working class. Although the internationalists opposed the unrestricted immigration of Asians to New Zealand, they also argued that coloured workers in the country should not be made enemies. The practical implications of internationalism required that coloured workers should be treated as equals and organised into unions.

This view was first spelt out in the report of the Committee on coloured labour, presented at the 1917 Trade Union Conference. The motion which outlined the policy of racial equality was carried by the conference although several delegates spoke out against it and expressed a strong resolution that coloured workers would never join their union. There was a great deal of subsequent discussion on the matter but no definite steps were taken to ensure that coloured labour was organised into unions.

In 1920 external circumstances put pressure on unions in New Zealand to make the necessary adjustments. Early in the year New Zealand Labour had become involved in an industrial dispute in Fiji. A strike by Indian workers for higher wages had been met by the use of armed forces from New Zealand. Massey claimed that the military expedition to Fiji was to protect white women and children and not to intimidate the strikers. Unionists and Labour politicians saw the move in a different light and denounced the government's action. The Seamen's Union initiated an investigation as to why members of its union manned the vessel 'that took

an armed force to suppress men standing out for improved conditions.'⁶⁹ One of the Union's officials, Anderson, claimed that the vessel would never had been taken to Fiji if the seamen had known that it was to be used for strike-breaking.⁷⁰

The support expressed for the Indian workers encouraged them in their efforts to establish their unions. On 24 November the Maoriland Worker informed its readers that the Indian workers were looking to New Zealand Labour for further aid. Mittner, the secretary of the Indian Workers' Union in Nandi wished his union to be affiliated to a Labour organisation in New Zealand.⁷¹

The Maoriland Worker responded to this plea by giving its readers an in-depth analysis of the coloured Labour problem. The editorial for 1 December, after a discussion on the current issue in the context of the history of East-West relations, suggested a partial solution. As the coloured workers were ignorant of European customs, language and laws they were easy prey for the exploiting capitalists. The way to ensure that they would not be used as a threat to the European worker then was to organise them into unions and encourage the union movement in their native lands. The editor had no doubts of the coloured workers' ability as a fighting unionst and therefore called on the Alliance of Labour to respond to Mittner's request and 'extend a welcoming hand.' The editorial ended with an emphatic and emotional

69. WSU General Meeting 23 February 1920

70. Anderson to Young 29 April 1920 ASU Correspondence

71 MW 24 November 1920.

statement of Labour's commitment to racial equality.

Let us face facts once more. Unless we understand each other, we who are of the exploited of Australasia and Asia will find our masters sending us forth to slit each others throats, and in our ignorance, due to our lack of understanding, we will, in the mass, obey.

Let Labour prove its Internationality. First an understanding with Fiji, then India, and then the rest of Asia. Either that or bloodshed.

Either International Brotherhood-Socialism
- or chaos !⁷²

A second article in the paper attacked unions in New Zealand which through 'blind ignorance' and prejudice, refused to allow coloured workers into their ranks. Again the usual socialist arguments against these policies were given and unionists were admonished to be true to their principles of allowing 'wage slaves' membership, regardless of race, colour or creed.

Two important unions in the country had specific clauses in their constitutions which discriminated against racial groups. The New Zealand Workers' Union and the Seamen's Union had, since the late nineteenth century, maintained and, at times, vigorously defended their exclusionist policies. However by late 1921 the discriminating clauses had been removed from the constitutions of both unions and coloured workers were permitted to enjoy equal status with white workers.

With the Seamen's Union a lack of documentation has made it difficult to trace clearly the circumstances in which the

72. Ibid, 1 December 1920

changes occurred. It appears that coloured workers had become members of the Union before changes in the constitution had taken place. A list released in 1918 of birth-places of men enrolled in the union since the outbreak of the war showed some coloured members. The twenty Cook Islanders, five West Indians, two Indians, two Niue Islanders and one Fijian represented only a small fraction of the 1,900 total, but in the context of previous resistance their entry into the union has some significance.⁷³ Raratongans were also admitted into the Union during the war period and this was the result of the shortage of seamen that occurred because of the war.⁷⁴

Although some coloured people became members of the Seamen's Union they were still subjected to discrimination through the constitution. In 1919 the Wellington branch of the Union nominated a coloured member, A.I.Luff, to the position of assistant secretary of the branch. This nomination was rejected by the Head Office which claimed that Luff was inelligible under rules 72(c) and 90 of the constitution.⁷⁵ The particular objection to Luff's nomination lay in the interpretation given to the wording 'British Subject' that applied to the constitution. Details of the rules produced a few months before the incident placed the following condition on local branches:

73. WSU General Meeting 7 October 1918

74. FSU Executive Council Minutes 12 May 1920

75. Head Office to WSU 17 November 1918

Each person nominated for the office in any local or as an Executive Councillor must be a British subject by birth or by naturalisation, but members of any coloured race are excluded.⁷⁶

A set of rules for 1921 included in its Interpretation section rule 88, which defined 'British subject' to exclude members of any coloured race. However there were no references to 'British Subject' in the body of the rules, thus making it technically possible for coloured members to be treated equally with other members. These discrepancies were eventually cleared up and, in an undated though much later set of rules, the sole criterion of membership was 'sobriety and general character.'

The crude racism of Belcher was no longer acceptable to officials in the Seamen's Union. In the pre-war years Belcher had spent a great deal of energy establishing the White New Zealand policy to the maritime fleet. This was rejected in 1918 by the Executive Council of the Union. At a meeting of the executive in September 1918 Raglan and Brown attempted to get recognition for the principle that the New Zealand Maritime Marine be composed of white British subjects only. It was lost by a vote of 7 to 2.⁷⁷

When the New Zealand Workers' Union held its annual conference in July 1921 coloured workers and union membership was dealt with as a major issue confronting the Union. Initiation of a discussion for a change of policy came from three unions; the Gum Workers' Union, The Auckland General

76. FSU Executive Council 28 September 1915 (Circular in McCullough Papers).

77. FSU Executive Council Special Meeting 12 Sept. 1918

Labourers' Union and the Matata branch of the New Zealand Workers' Union. Their respective remits were:

1. That the rule debarring Asiatics from joining the NZWU should be abolished and the Asiatics encouraged to become members of the Union.
2. That all Chinese, Kanakas, Africans, and all coloured aliens be admitted to membership.
3. That clause 6 of the Constitution be altered to read that all wage-earners, irrespective of colour, caste or creed be admitted to membership of this union. 78

Later in the Conference a remit similar to those above was introduced by Timaru delegates but it was struck out.

A lengthy discussion followed the introduction of the remits and all the delegates presented forceful arguments. Despite a strong defence of the existing policy a motion to adopt the remits was carried by a decisive vote of 17 to 2.

The main argument for racially tolerant policies was economic. The arrival of Asians in New Zealand was regarded as the work of capitalists and the only way to fight this exploitation was to bring coloured workers into the union. Union membership of non-white labour would ensure protection for both the coloured and white workers. Some delegates felt that coloured workers worked for low wages because of economic survival. One delegate claimed that it occurred because of the ill-feeling generated by being rejected by fellow workers. A number expanded the economic case and spoke of the demands of internationalism. Whyte, from Canterbury, argued that, as the Union had a socialist objective which regarded the human

race as one family, no distinctions should be drawn.

Only three delegates, Grayndler, the secretary, Baldwin, the President-elect, and MacManus spoke against the remits. All three cited their experiences as workers in Australia where competition with Chinese workers had convinced them of the intolerable evil that coloured labour was. Both Baldwin and MacManus were wary of allowing coloured labour into the Union as it might encourage the Government to allow continued Asian immigration. The difficulty was much deeper in Grayndler's eyes as it was 'impossible to organise' coloured workers.

The acceptance of a policy of racial equality in union matters was a great blow to these stalwarts of the exclusion laws. Even after the vote had been taken they were not willing to admit defeat. MacManus felt that the decision of the conference was not representative of the feelings of the members of the Union and moved to have a plebiscite of the rank and file to decide the issue. This criticism was quickly attacked by other delegates who claimed that the remits themselves originated from the rank and file and had their complete support. MacManus' motion was defeated 14 to 5.

One further attempt by the old racists to resist the change came from the Wellington branch of the Union. Their remit that 'no coloured aliens be allowed to become members on the grounds of race-purity not on economic grounds was struck out of the order sheet.⁷⁹

79. MW 20 July 1921

Reaction to the Conference's decision by other members of the NZWU varied. One member, P.E. Pederson from Te Apiti, wrote to Grayndler and, as a protest against the move, gave his resignation from the union.⁸⁰ Like Grayndler he remembered the 'scabbing' done by Chinese in the shearing sheds during the Australian strikes of the 1890's. It was in this action, claimed Pederson that the antipathy of many white shearers originated, and to befriend the Chinese was an affront to early members of the union. Pederson's attack on the Chinese was put into perspective by J. Thom from Mangahao. Thom stated that Chinese only shored at one shed during the strike and that most of the 'scabs' were 'white' workers.⁸¹

During 1921 Grayndler claimed that the Conference's decision could not be enforced until it was endorsed by the Australian Workers' Union Congress. This administrative detail was dealt with at the 1922 Conference when the Shag Valley Station branch of the union introduced a remit which recommended that 'it be a remit to the AWU convention that the New Zealand branch be allowed full liberty to enrol coloured workers, irrespective of their nationality.'⁸² This remit was supported by one from the Omarama Station which stated the members objection to the exclusion membership clause and called for the entry of 'coloured aliens' into the union.

When discussion on the remits began Grayndler persisted in his efforts to dissuade members from bringing to a conclusion the policies of equality. In his address he read the

80. Ibid 10 August 1921

81. Ibid 31 August 1921

82. Ibid 31 May 1922

fourth clause of the constitution of the Australian Workers' Union which he interpreted to mean that branches had the free right to enrol coloured workers. Grayndler argued that, as the clause had been operative during 1921 and as no Indians or Chinese had become members, it was futile to move any further in the direction of accommodation. He also claimed that the general membership disapproved of the decision of the 1921 Conference, but he did not state how he arrived at this conclusion.⁸³ His efforts to halt discussion with nit-picking administrative details were unsuccessful and delegates upheld the principle of racial equality in union matters.

The discussion on the issue was charged with the rhetoric of class struggle and worker solidarity. McKee drew attention to the Labour movements of China and India and stressed the point that only in unity with workers in these countries could the white wage earner 'overthrow the capitalist system.' The merits of coloured workers, including South Pacific Islanders as militant unionists were highlighted by delegates, often to the shame of white workers. A long-time advocate of the international of Labour, McInerney, gave examples of strike action taken by workers in Japan and concluded with a warning that, if coloured workers were not organised, then the white workers would be 'crushed'.

A motion which captured the mood of the Conference was introduced by McKee. It said: 'That all workers irrespective of colour, caste or creed be admitted as members of this union, and that a ballot on this be taken.' It was carried with no difficulty, but unfortunately no evidence of a ballot survives.

83. Ibid 2 August 1922

The New Zealand Workers' Union Conferences of 1921 and 1922 were a decisive blow to the racist policies that the Union had adopted for so long. The debates on the issue revealed not only a widespread desire for acceptable policies, but also a good understanding of the issue. Clearly the decisive factor in the policy change was the impact of international socialist ideology in the Workers' Union. At both conferences most delegates argued for change on the basis of a commitment to the principles of working class solidarity. The enemy of the workers, it was often stated, was the exploiting capitalist, not the coloured labourer.

Through the discussions on the issue one group, the Auckland General Labourers' Union, consistently presented the racial equality principle. At the 1917 Trade Union Conference the Union was represented by W.Richards and R.Heffron. Richards was a member of the committee which drafted the statement on coloured Labour and Heffron was outspoken on the socialist viewpoint.⁸⁴ At the 1921 Conference, three General Labourers' Union's delegates, O'Neill, Jones and Derrick were present. All three gave forceful arguments from an internationalist perspective for racial equality in the Workers' Union. Jones' speech was typical when he stated that 'no indifferent attitude towards the coloured question was justified and it conflicted with the principle of international fraternity.'⁸⁵

The Auckland General Labourers' Union, more than any other group affiliated to the New Zealand Workers' Union,

84. 1917 Trade Union Congress p21.

85. MW 13 July 1921

had a strong heritage of socialism. The Union was founded in 1908 and soon became a member of the 'Red' Federation of Labour. In 1911 and 1912 the Union had a strong, militant leadership under the presidency of Peter Fraser.⁸⁶ Although the industrial defeat of 1912 severely weakened the union, the influence of radical ideology was not entirely lost from the union. It continued to uphold internationalist ideals and applied them to current issues such as coloured labour.

In the political wing of the Labour movement internationalism had become clearly evident throughout 1920, although for some politicians it was mixed with racist beliefs. In 1921 the Party's racial policies were dominated by the socialist principles and the old racism was rejected outright by the Party. This was made evident by the Party's treatment of the White New Zealand policy. This policy had been well entrenched in the Labour movement, particularly during the pre-war years, when the Independent Political Labour League had it written into its election platform. Although Liberal, Reform and R.S.A spokesmen upheld a White New Zealand during 1920 it received only a little emphasis in the Labour movement.

At the 1921 Australian Peace Conference a motion was carried which repudiated the 'policy of exclusion based on a claim of the white race to intrinsic superiority.'⁸⁷ Details of this conference were conveyed to New Zealand through R.S.Ross, a militant socialist who had once edited the Maoriland Worker. Although he lived in Australia Ross

86. H.Roth, 'Peter Fraser and the General Labourers' Here and Now Vol 3, No 2, 1952, p20.

87, MW 4 May 1921.

still kept close ties with the New Zealand Labour movement. When the White Australia policy was debated during 1921 Ross was particularly keen that leaders in New Zealand pay close attention to it and examine the issues it presented.

The opportunity for the Labour Party to make a decision on the White New Zealand policy came in September 1921 at the Party's annual conference. A remit introduced by the Canterbury Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants and moved from the chair called for the Conference to commit the Labour Party to 'support the policy of maintaining a "white New Zealand."' ⁸⁸ At the introduction of the motion two of the Party's leading theorists, John Gilchrist and Harry Holland, rose to speak against it. Gilchrist felt that the Conference would be foolish to pass the remit and was surprised to see that there was still so much ignorance on the question in the Labour movement. Holland echoed the former's sentiments and made it clear that the problem of cheap coloured labour was a different proposition. The remit was subsequently defeated.

The formal rejection of a White New Zealand was the decisive blow to the racial attitudes and policies which had been an inseparable part of the Labour movement since 1878. The turnabout was not explicitly stated but it left Labour racists and the party's critics in no doubt as to the party's position.

The key factor in the establishment of a policy of worker solidarity in the political wing of the movement lay

88. Ibid 7 September 1921

in the timing of the Party's formation. In New Zealand, unlike in Australia, a unified, independent Labour party was not formed until relatively late in the history of the Labour movement. The Liberal-Labour alliance had set back the creation of the Labour Party until well into the twentieth-century. The political activity of the years prior to 1916 was weak and suffered from the militant-conservative split in the wider movement. It was the resolving of this division that led to the formation of the party and, by this time, socialists were well integrated into the movement, with many in key positions. The rise of Holland, Fraser, Semple, Parry, and Savage to national prominence, as well as the presence of men with socialist beliefs at the local level meant that the Labour Party headed towards internationalist racial views. Although there was some ambiguity among some of the socialists, the internationalist line was sufficiently influential to ensure that the racism of the early Labour movement was not institutionalised in the new Party.

CHAPTER V INTERNATIONALISM TO THE FURE 1922-1928

In the early twentieth century the Labour movement's response to non-European immigration was essentially one of conflict between racist and internationalist policies. The racist line which had emerged in the late nineteenth century reached its peak in the years 1904-12. The international socialist challenge began at this time but did not become a significant force until the last years of the war. In the period 1917-21 both streams of thought were present in the Labour movement, although the internationalist stance had an important moderating effect in both the political and industrial wings. In the period under review in this chapter, 1922-28, the theme is the predominance of internationalist views on non-European immigration and racial theories.

Although the Labour movement no longer regarded the Asian immigration and coloured labour issues as major ones, writings by theorists in the movement appeared regularly in the 1920's and detailed more clearly ideas that had been used during earlier years. Whether it was a statement on general principles of racial relations or a critical analysis of the policies that had been developed in New Zealand, the writers sought to dispell the old fears and arguments that had characterized much of the early Labour movement. Three men, John Gilchrist, John Brailsford and Lloyd Ross, were responsible for the not insignificant amount of literature which appeared on racial issues.

The first major comment came from Gilchrist at a meeting of the Dunedin central branch of the Labour Party during 1923.¹ The lecture, entitled 'Race Intermixture', culminated for Gilchrist a long-standing battle he had fought against racial bigotry in the Labour movement. In his lecture Gilchrist sought to show that racial prejudice was the last of the three stumbling blocks to humanitarian progress. The other two, religious and nationalistic prejudice, had already reached their peak and were in decline. The third, racial prejudice, persisted and it was important that it be condemned for the evil it was.

Racial prejudice, argued Gilchrist, was largely the product of nineteenth century theories which asserted that man had several origins. Beliefs based on polygenetic theories sought to keep the world's race separated because it was feared that any intermingling of the races would inevitably lead to a hybrid, degenerate breed. These were the arguments used by Labour in the nineteenth century. According to Gilchrist these views had been supplanted in the 1920's by the monogenetic or oneness of origin theory. This asserted that man was a single species and that races were merely varieties of that species.

After discussing the origins of race, Gilchrist went on to argue that the tests of fertility, virility, mentality, morality and 'spirituality', biology and history proved conclusively that the intermixture of races was highly desirable. The Franco-Canadians, Dani-Eskimos, Griquas of South

1. MW 8 August 1923

Africa and Paulistas of Brazil were given as examples of groups which were the product of intermixture between two or more different racial groups. In each case it was claimed that there existed an energy and physical vitality that often surpassed that of the original stocks. Racial intermixture, Gilchrist argued, was the rule through pre-historic and historic time and the half-caste population invariably combined the best attributes of the two races from which they originated. Racial purity was the exception and led to infertility and degeneration.

The attainment of a higher civilization lay in the combining of the qualities found among the races of mankind. If this was recognised and applied then the 'new international order' would be ushered in. Gilchrist qualified this by stating that this could not occur while the capitalist system existed. However when it passed away 'the free intermingling of the world's peoples would undoubtedly take place, and, if we were to believe science [sic] nothing but good could result.'

Although Gilchrist did not specifically discuss the White New Zealand policy and the racial attitudes of the Labour movement, his address was an implicit judgement of those attitudes and policies. However his use of science was different to that of the racists only in that he used it to counter racism not to affirm it. His belief that the 'science of biology was in favour of mixture' was a reversal of the racists' dogma that biology upheld racial purity. In both cases science is selectively used to justify and reinforce a pre-determined racial view based on ideological, economic or personal factors.

In 1926 some more revisionist literature appeared, this time from the pen of John Brailsford. Brailsford was born in New Zealand, but had worked in San Francisco, Hankow, Melbourne and Kobe as a journalist and editor. He had been active in the Australian Labour movement and was a prominent delegate at the 1921 Australian Peace Council which had rejected exclusionist immigration policies based on belief in the inherent supremacy of the white race. Through the Workers' Educational Association's journal, the New Zealand Highway, Brailsford presented his analysis on the New Zealand Labour movement's immigration policies.² The exclusionist policies of the country were, he claimed, built 'largely upon the quicksands of prejudice and false argument.' Racial prejudice he regarded as the 'repulsion for the unknown that we have inherited from the beasts.' It had been 'sanctified' by exclusion advocates and added to by an 'artificial prejudice against mixed races.' These dogmas were dismissed by Brailsford who, from seven years residence in the East, had found no evidence to support the supposed 'inherent degeneracy of people of mixed blood.' Brailsford recognised the need for discussions on inter-racial issues, but felt that this could not occur in the country's press. He recommended that the Workers' Educational Association should take the lead in presenting unprejudicial racial views. One way in which this could be done was for a university to set up a school of 'Oriental' studies and for Asian students to be sponsored to study in New Zealand.

2. J.A.Brailsford, "New Zealand and Racial Intercourse", New Zealand Highway Vol 1(10) 1926 pp1-4.

The most prolific of the Labour writers on racial issues, Lloyd Ross, wrote several articles in 1927. Ross, son of Robert S. Ross, was a university lecturer in Dunedin and was one of the emerging Labour intellectuals who were prominent in the Workers' Educational Association. Although he did not stay in New Zealand for long he made a significant contribution to the Labour movement, especially in the area of racial relations.

His views on the immigration issue appeared in the New Zealand Highway in July 1927.³ His article for the journal was yet another cutting attack on the policies of the Labour movement towards immigration generally as well as its policies on Asian immigration in particular. On the wider immigration issue Ross was critical of the views of men like Jim Roberts who attributed the country's employment difficulties to the immigration policies of the Government. The New Zealand Transport Worker of February 1927 had stated that 'the cause of unemployment is that the influx of immigration into the country is too great for the development of industry to absorb.' This was rejected by Ross who accused Labour leaders of 'forgetting their fundamentals in a desire for political gain.' Unemployment, according to Ross, was the result of the mismanagement of the economic system and the remedy lay, not in immigration controls, but in a restructuring of the industrial organisation of the country. For Ross, Internationalism meant that workers

3. L. Ross, "The Difficulties of an Internationalist", New Zealand Highway Vol 2(9) 1927 pp7-10.

should have freedom of movement to other countries, and the 'hysteria of politicians' and 'superficialities of trade union secretaries' were making a mockery of this.

On the past attitude of Labour towards non-European immigrants Ross was a particularly severe critic. Outbursts about a 'White New Zealand' and the 'Yellow Peril' were, he claimed, the 'arrogant epithets of the racial maniac', and were completely at odds with the principle of the world solidarity of Labour. Praise was accorded for D. Wilson, the Labour Party's delegate to the 1926 World Migration Conference, for his stand on Asian immigration. At the Conference, Wilson made it clear that the Labour Party's objection to the entrance of large numbers of Asians rested on social and economic factors which applied equally to immigration from Great Britain and Asia.⁴ At the same Conference, Evatt, the Australian Labour Party's delegate, justified its policy on the White Australia ideal on the 'ethnological fact of non-assimilation of non-European races.'⁵

Later in 1927 Ross paid more attention to specific racial matters in a series of articles he wrote for the New Zealand Worker. On 7 September his sixth article, entitled "The Races of Mankind", dealt with the various racial theories.⁶ The article drew heavily on a wide range of research on scientific methodology and racial issues and, in detail, far surpassed Gilchrist's article of four years earlier.

4. International Federation of Trade Unions. World Migration and Labour, ... convened by the International Federation of trade unions and the Labour and socialist international at London; June 1926. Amsterdam 1926. p376.

5. Ibid p362.

6. NZW 7 September 1927.

On the origin of race, Ross was firmly in the monogenetic school of thought. He argued that man was of common origin but over the long span of human development diversification had taken place in the human species. Differences of colour, body shape and facial features between racial types had developed but there were, according to Ross, the result of particular environmental factors such as climate and diet. Race, then, was a matter of environment and if one race was superior to another this superiority was environmental only. In the rest of his article Ross went to great lengths to dispell notions of 'pure race', 'racial culture' and 'white race superiority'. Leading anthropologists and scientists such as Tozer, Haddon, Marrett, Wentworth, Barnes, Langton-Davis and Ripley were quoted to show that the commonly held conceptions of coloured race had no scientific basis.

Ross' analysis on race was not intended to be an esoteric discussion relevant only to other intellectuals in the Labour movement. He was fully aware of the type of reader that the New Zealand Worker reached and deliberately directed his article to make them aware of the practical implications of his views. A series of questions were put at the end of the article which aimed at getting readers to think carefully about the issues involved. These questions covered areas such as miscegenation, racial beliefs and world peace, the White New Zealand policy, proofs of inherent superiority, the differentiation of race and culture, and definition of race.

The ideas of Gilchrist, Brailsford and Ross were the most progressive racial views presented in New Zealand during the 1920's. Non-Labour writings on race appeared late in the decade but were more restrained in their approach. In November 1927 T. Hall wrote an article entitled "New Zealand and Asiatic Immigration."⁷ In his article Hall was critical of 'excessive racial consciousness' and called for a more sympathetic treatment of Asian immigrants. In subsequent years he published further articles on the topic of Asian immigration but compared to the writing of the Internationalists they were only a mild statement on New Zealand's racial policies. In the nineteenth century the Labour movement had led the way in the dissemination of racist views but in the 1920's Labour internationalists were the clearest and most convincing critics of those policies and the racial assumptions that they were based on. The call for racial tolerance and equality was also the strongest from the Labour writers.

The progressive thought of Ross and Brailsford becomes more marked when set against popular racial attitudes and issues of the mid to late 1920's. At about the same time that the Labour revisionist writings were published there was a renewal of opposition against Asians. In 1926 a 'White New Zealand League' was formed by Pukekohi potato and onion growers in response to the entry of Asian market-gardeners into the district.⁸ It was alleged that the Asians

7. Economic Record Vol. 3, November 1927 pp228-239.

8. Citizens of the Future are Children of Today, the White New Zealand League, Auckland 1926.

were living in sub-standard conditions, especially with regard to housing, and were under-cutting the prices of white market gardeners. Response to the League's formation was considerable and surprised the organisers. Many newspapers took up their cause and groups all over the country gave approval to the League.

The League claimed that over 160 Local bodies, representing 670,000 people, had given approval to their aims and objectives. The primary aim of the League was to protect the market-gardening industry from this alleged competition. They approached this by focusing on the wider immigration issue and the emotive appeal to keep New Zealand a white man's country.⁹

The League conducted an extensive propaganda campaign against Asians. A number of pamphlets were published and traditional sources of support for anti-Asian campaigns were approached by the League as it sought to bring the issue into prominence. Labour organisations in the country were approached, but their replies were not those sought after by the League. Late in 1926 the New Zealand Transport Worker published its response to the requests of the League for support. The editorial writer echoed the League's concerns over the possibilities of the standard of living being lowered but made it quite clear that coloured workers were no more of a threat to these standards than European immigration was. The League was left in no doubt of the policy of the Waterside Workers' Union on the issue. The following state-

9. Don't Fail to Read this Appeal, the White New Zealand League 1927.

ment made that clear:

The Labour movement is international and recognises that in each country in the world there is a class struggle between those who sell their labour power and those who buy it. We recognise further that each country has a standard of living which is in accordance with the intelligence of the workers' and the industrial development of that country. Labour cannot lay down any definite policy in connection with the colour or creed of any men, but it can have a definite policy in regard to the standard of living of the workers.

No immigration can come to New Zealand unless and until the workers of this country are all found adequate housing accommodation and employment.¹⁰

A month later the League's hopes for the co-operation of the Labour movement were dashed further when the New Zealand Worker reprinted a letter from the Wellington Tramway Employees Union to the League. The Union informed the League that it was satisfied that existing legislation was sufficient 'to prevent any influx of Asiatics' and therefore was 'unable to co-operate with [the League] in [its] suggested methods.'¹¹

Both of these organisations had, during 1917-1921, expressed views which reflected a mixture of racism and internationalism. However by 1926 this ambivalence had been removed and the internationalist line was the one adhered to.

A requirement of Internationalism was that workers in New Zealand adhere to principles of working class solidarity and, where possible, support the cause of Labour in other

10. New Zealand Transport Worker 1 December 1926

11. NZW 5 January 1927

countries. In the nineteenth century this was rarely done, except in cases of solidarity with white workers. This was in the main due to a lack of international consciousness in the New Zealand Labour movement. Also the Labour movements of Asian countries were weak or non-existent and so received little attention in New Zealand. After the war the growth of trade unionism and the politicization of Labour in Asia accelerated and Asians became a dynamic element in the Labour International. In Japan eleven new trade unions were formed in 1918 and in the following year this rose to 71.¹² By 1923 over 430 unions claimed the allegiance of some 125,000 workers. The Chinese Seamen's Union, the largest and most active of the Chinese Labour unions, experienced rapid growth in 1927 when membership rose from 1500 in January to 50,000 by the end of March.¹³ In the first six months of 1921 in India there were over 200 strikes and by 1923 a Labour party had been formed in the country.¹⁴

The activity of the Labour movement in these countries received wide coverage in the working class press of New Zealand. With the growth of international trade the dangers of cheap labour were no longer seen in the narrow immigration issue. Goods manufactured cheaply in Japan or China and exported to European countries were seen as a real competitive threat. Labour internationalists argued that the

12. International Labour Office. Industrial Conditions and Labour Legislation in Japan. Studies and Reports, Series B No.16 Geneva 1926 p88

13. MW 12 December 1923

14. Ibid 5 September 1927

employers, who sought out cheap labour, were particularly drawn to Asia where this pool of labour was readily available. It therefore behoved the interests of the New Zealand Labour organisations to support the Labour organisations in Asia which sought to raise the workers' conditions.

After a strike by Chinese seamen in Hong Kong during 1922 the Maoriland Worker declared: 'we stand with the Chinese seamen and we are against the white profiteer.'¹⁵ In the New Zealand Seamen's Union this growing awareness of international worker solidarity was also reflected. In August 1927 the union forwarded a donation of £50 to the Chinese Seamen's Union for its 'struggle against imperialistic oppression.'¹⁶ Leaders and members of the union were encouraged to express the same co-operative spirit towards the Lascars and help them to better their conditions.¹⁷

In 1924 Walter Nash took up the cause of Indian workers in Fiji before Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister of Great Britain, Olivier, Secretary of State to India, and Thomas, Secretary of State for the Colonies. In a report to these politicians Nash drew attention to the work conditions, medical care and education provision of Indian sugar workers. Many Indians were finding it difficult to get repatriation, particularly after conditions tightened up following the 1920 strike.¹⁸ The lack of adequate hospital accommodation,

15. Ibid 15 March 1922

16. Bollinger, Against the Wind, p171

17. MW 30 August 1922

18. Ibid 13 February 1924

particularly for childbirth, and the imbalance of educational facilities between the Indian and white population were other grievances singled out by Nash.

The international Labour cause was given a stronger emphasis from the revived Communist Party. In some of the racial and Labour issues the communists took a line that was similar to that of the early socialists. The standard doctrinaire line was taken when non-European immigration was considered. The Communist Party was a firm upholder of the 'equal rights of all workers, irrespective of nationality or colour, to establish themselves in New Zealand.'¹⁹ The realization of this had been thwarted by the employers, who had secured immigration restrictions against coloured workers.

Through the columns of the Workers' Vanguard the efforts of various workers' movements throughout the world were given extensive coverage. Two countries in particular, India and China, were accorded special attention. The paper corresponded with unions in China and many leading articles dealt exclusively with the state of China's Labour movement. Chinese workers were upheld as the best model of the radical working class, and the deaths of workers in China were given emotive reports in the paper. These Chinese martyrs were to inspire other 'fighters for the working class to redouble their efforts for the new era'.²⁰

The rhetoric from the Communists was misplaced in the late 1920's as strong racial feelings against non-European

19. Workers Vanguard 2 July 1928

20. Ibid 1 September 1928

immigrants were not the force in New Zealand society that they once had been. Some outbreaks of anti-Asian sentiment occurred but these reflected concerns of a local nature not ones of national importance. In part this was due to a general confidence that the 1920 Immigration Restriction Amendment Act had solved the problems of non-European immigration. However the change was not a phenomena peculiar solely to New Zealand. In Australia, Canada and the United States the radicalism of earlier decades was conspicuously absent. The 1920's were, as Price notes, a period of 'guarding the battlements against occasional marauders or scally-wags, not of building or holding defences against dangerous and powerful enemies.'²¹

This decline in New Zealand white racism was mirrored in the Labour movement which moved further to the Left on racial matters. By 1928 few of the early Labour racists were prominent in the movement and a new generation had emerged on whom the old racial myths had no impact. Partly by default and partly through the convictions of leading union and political Labour leaders internationalism had supplanted racism as the New Zealand Labour movement's position on racial and immigration issues.

21. Price, The Great White Walls are Built p24.

CHAPTER VI CONCLUSION

The New Zealand experience of non-European immigration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was similar to experiences in other white countries bordering on the Pacific. Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand were all faced with waves of Asian, primarily Chinese, immigrants to their shores at a time when their own national identities and economies were being formed. In New Zealand the large-scale immigration of Asians began ten to fifteen years after that for Australia and the United States and was not on the same scale as the other nations. Subsequently, the response from Europeans in New Zealand was milder, but the problems perceived from the contact with groups of a different racial and cultural nature were not lessened.

The existence of ethnocentric attitudes in a particular group or society has been and still is a widespread occurrence. The identification with an 'in-group' which has certain 'superior' qualities and an awareness of an 'out-group' which is regarded as different, 'inferior' and threatening inevitably leads to certain tensions in inter-group relations. Such attitudes were strong in New Zealand during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Europeans, conscious of a demonstrable superiority in power and knowledge over other cultural groups, had long exhibited these feelings towards these groups. The results were prejudice and discrimination which allowed the Europeans to maintain their privileged place in the social, political and economic structure of society.

When the in-group perceives that it is under imminent danger from the out-group a strong response results and severe measures are advocated to protect the in-group. For New Zealand trade unionists the Chinese were the out-group to be feared. Unionists perceived that the Chinese were a threat to their economic security and conducted a lengthy battle against Chinese immigration.

The opposition to Chinese cannot be explained solely by ethnocentric attitudes. New Zealand unionists were influenced by the prevailing racial ideas and these racial beliefs were a key factor in the formation of attitudes and policies towards non-European immigrants. In the nineteenth century ethnocentric views were being added to by developments in the biological sciences. Theories of history and society which focused on the determinant factor of race had appeared in the early nineteenth century and by the 1890's these views were in full force. Contemporaries believed that race and culture were inseparably linked and that culture was determined by immutable and innate racial traits.

Racism was not a phenomena peculiar to New Zealand and occurred in other white colonies throughout the world. From 1880 to 1920 European racism was at its height and one form that it took was the exclusion of immigrants of non-European stock. This racism was congruent in politics with nationalism; in the social sciences with social Darwinism; in philosophy with a reaction to eighteenth-century environmentalism; and in economics with the colonial form of capitalist exploitation.

Racist views were widespread in New Zealand during the nineteenth century but it was in the Labour movement that these views received their fullest expression. The emotive appeal of nationalism, the social Darwinist vision of the battle of the races and feared economic competition fused in the Labour movement to produce a series of anti-Chinese campaigns. Racism in the Labour movement peaked in the early twentieth century when the White New Zealand policy was established. Regulations which discriminated against groups on a racial basis were a feature of trade unionism in New Zealand from its early beginnings and these policies were defended in this period with great vigour by Labour racists.

By the mid 1920's, however, there were many signs that this racism was on the decline. The White New Zealand policy had been rejected by the Labour Party and two unions which had strong racist histories had revoked their discriminating policies. The changes can also be seen by a comparison of the various anti-Chinese associations. In the 1894-1896 campaign the formation of the Anti-Chinese Associations were largely the work of trade unions. Union leaders were the key organisers and many unions provided the base of support. In the period 1894 to 1896 over 30 separate unions were involved in the campaigns. The 1907 Anti-Asiatic League was formed outside of the Labour movement but was soon allied to both the trade unions and political Labour organisations. By 1912 non-Labour sectional interests were more involved in the anti-Chinese movement, with the Christchurch Anti-Chinese Association reflecting local small businesses. Some unions

were involved with the Association but their activity was less than in previous years. The White New Zealand League, the last stronghold of New Zealand racism, was completely unsuccessful in its attempts to receive union support. The relation of the unions to the League illustrated the changes which had taken place. In 1895 the Labour movement was responsible for the creation of an organisation which sought racist policies. In 1926 a similar type of organisation was shunned by trade unions.

It is possible to explain the decline of racism in the Labour movement by viewing it in a global context. Racial relations in other countries where racism had once been strong were improving. In New Zealand there was none of the heightened racial consciousness of earlier years, although some pockets of bigotry lingered on. The wider changes in European attitudes were little more than the background to changes in the Labour movement. Racial prejudice among unionists and Labour politicians did not lessen solely because of these passive, widespread changes. In the years through to 1928 racial prejudice was actively condemned in the Labour movement and decisive steps were taken to repudiate old racist policies. The key forces which led to these changes were ones that were within the movement itself and linked to a search for a genuine working-class consciousness.

A possible explanation for the shift in position on racial issues is linked with the origin of racism in the Labour movement. Leading racists in the movement had, at one time or another, worked in Australia. At public meetings these men were quick to speak from their experiences of

Chinese competition in Australia to warn of the dangers of permitting Chinese into New Zealand. By the 1920's a generation had emerged which had no prior experience of Australian racism and were also less prejudiced than the older racists. It was from this generation that tolerant attitudes and policies of equality were espoused.

The origin thesis of racism in the Labour movement has two flaws which makes it an inconclusive explanation for the rise and decline of racism. Firstly, although there was a great deal of talk about Chinese economic competition actual competition from the Chinese was not a common situation. When agitators talked about their experiences of Chinese competition they were usually talking about perceived experiences. This perception of competition was an expression of racial pre-conceptions of the Chinese which concluded that Chinese workers would always be a threat to European workers. These preconceptions had been evident in New Zealand from as early as the gold rush era. Thus unionists who had not been in Australia still approached the Chinese immigration issue with the same set of racial beliefs as those who had some more knowledge on the matter from their Australian experience.

The second flaw is that not all racists in the Labour movement came from Australia. Some, for example John Read, arrived in New Zealand from Great Britain and had no experience of the Australasian anti-Chinese campaigns. Also, some leading anti-racists originated from Australia and still held to tolerant views. Foremost among these were Harry Holland and W.E.Parry.

The key variable which accounts for the changes in attitudes and policies towards non-European immigrants is racial ideology. A relatively small but highly influential group of men committed to socialist views on inter-racial relations was the main agent of change. Since they arrived in New Zealand these socialists had attacked many of the conservative policies in the Labour movement. Their call for equal treatment for coloured workers made a significant impact and, in the post-war years, the implications of their views were carried out. Some Internationalists still held to racist prejudices but they were not able to check the moves towards measures of equality.

The success of internationalism lay in an independent factor in the development of the Labour movement; the late formation of the Labour Party. In Australia internationalism failed to make the impact on the Labour movement that it did in New Zealand. The Victorian Socialist Party was unsuccessful in its fight against racist policies and eventually internationalist influences were eroded away by racism. In New Zealand the reverse situation occurred because racial attitudes were not institutionalised in the Labour Party until much later. In the political wing of the Labour movement a strong Labour political party was not formed until after racism had peaked and during the phase when internationalism was becoming more important. In the crucial period of 1917 to 1920 internationalists became leaders in the Labour movement and their commitment to undermine the racism of previous years ensured their success.

In the fifty years after 1878, when Labour organisations first began to be involved in the question of non-European immigration, the Labour movement made an important contribution to the development of racial relations in New Zealand. By 1926 the Labour movement had left behind its early prejudices which had produced a series of campaigns against Asian immigrants. The 'Yellow Peril' which had captured the imaginations of early Labour leaders, had come to nothing.

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